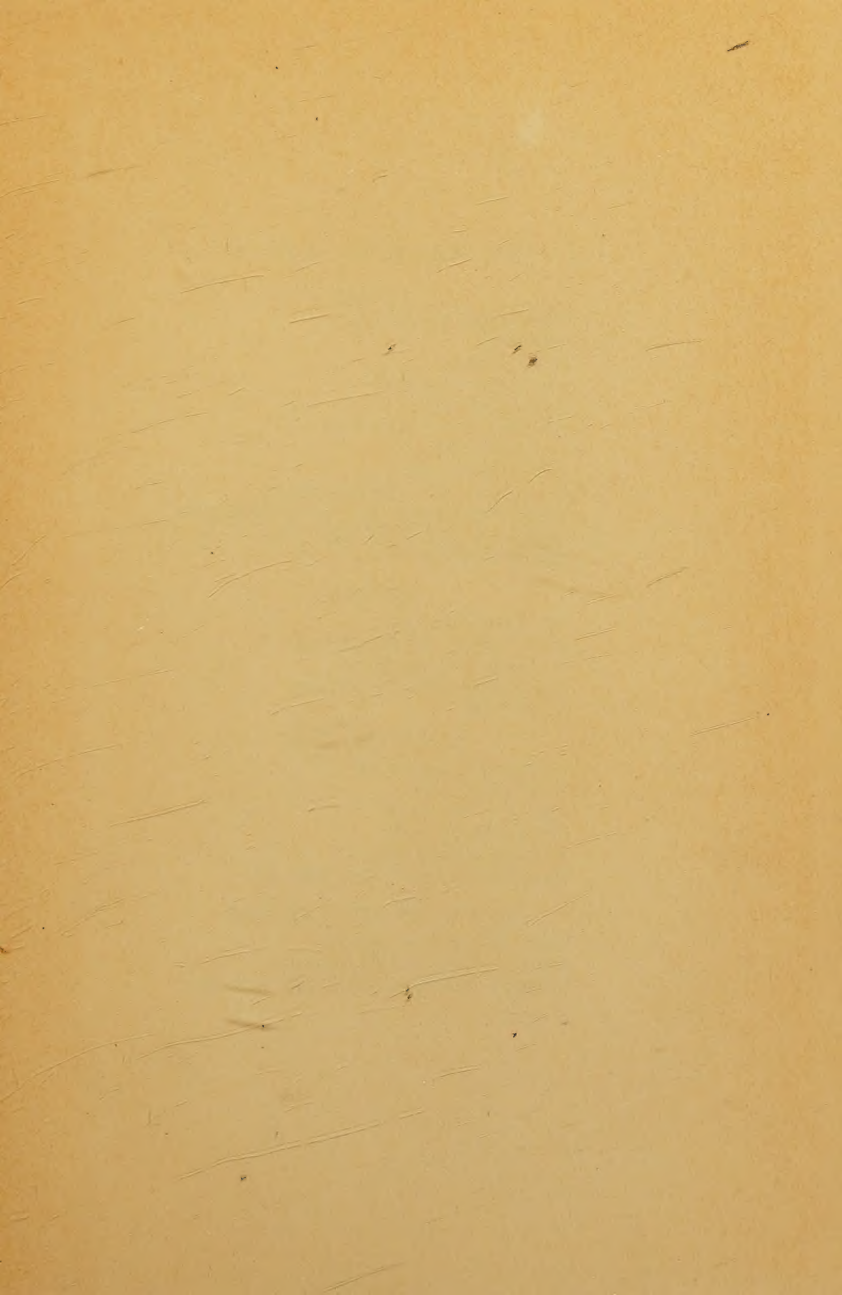


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BY ARTHUR TRAIN

NOVELS

THE HORNS OF RAMADAN
AMBITION
HIGH WINDS
THE BLIND GODDESS
THE NEEDLE'S EYE
HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN
THE GOLDFISH
THE EARTHQUAKE
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ABOUT MR. TUTT

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ABOUT LAW AND LAWYERS

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ON THE TRAIL OF THE BAD MEN
COURTS, CRIMINALS, AND THE CAMORRA

THE HORNS OF RAMADAN

THE HORNS OF RAMADAN

By
ARTHUR TRAIN



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TO
LE CAÏD SAÏD OU MOHAND

U. S. OFFICER SHOT TRYING TO SAVE LEGION COMRADE

Rushes Into Fire of Foes in Moroccan Battle.

1932

BY EDMOND TAYLOR.

[Chicago Tribune Press Service.]

PARIS, Oct. 5. — Lieut. Edgar Guerard Hamilton of Newcastle, Pa., the only American officer in the French foreign legion, is lying grievously wounded in the French military hospital at Capablanca. He was shot while making a gallant attempt to save the life of a wounded soldier in his command during a battle on Sept. 9 against Moroccan natives in the Atlas mountains, 9,000 feet above sea level.

Lieut. Hamilton visited Chicago on leave last spring and spoke before the Chicago Rotary club on his experiences in the foreign legion. His comrades reported that he seemed depressed since he returned from the United States.

"He seemed to be looking for the bullet that got him," a fellow legionnaire said.

Shot in the Head.

Lieut. Hamilton was wounded during an engagement against the Chleuhs, whom his detachment had just driven from a tree covered hilltop. An outpost was hit by a sniper's bullet and when the American rushed forward to bring him back, he himself was hit by a bullet which entered the left cheek near the nose and came out through the left ear. His lower jaw was fractured and his facial and auditory nerves were either cut by the bullet or paralyzed by shock.

After the battle Lieut. Hamilton was carried two and one-half miles down a steep mountainside on a stretcher and was then transported 25 miles on muleback through wild mountainous country to an ambulance, which took him another 25 miles to the nearest outpost of civilization, whence an airplane carried him to Capablanca.

Second American Wounded.

Another American, Corporal De Kalb, was wounded in the same engagement and is also at Capablanca hospital.

Lieut. Hamilton was a member of the Lafayette escadrille during the war. He reenlisted in the French foreign legion in 1922. He is one of very few foreigners to hold a commission in the famous body of adventurers, which bears the brunt of cleaning up France's colonial empire.

Yank Escapes Legion.

GIBRALTAR, Oct. 5.—(P)—Robert Young, holder of five decorations for bravery in the French foreign legion, was admitted to a hospital here today after a harrowing flight from the legion in Algeria. His mother is Mrs. Helen Young of Long Beach, Cal.

Young said he was 22 years old and educated at Stanford university, and that he had jointed the legion after a family quarrel in March, 1931. He had walked sixty-five miles from Ma-

laga, Spain, to the hospital here and was suffering especially from sciatica.

The patient said he had undergone great privations and the sternest of military discipline during his service, having been wounded several times and decorated five times for bravery.

He said he was in the disastrous troop train wreck near Tlemcen, Algeria, a few weeks ago, and decided he could withstand no further privations. Young and an Italian companion at arms named Giuseppe Carusso abandoned the legion shortly after the wreck. Carusso was shot dead by guards while they were attempting to cross the Algerian frontier. Young escaped by swimming the Maluva river.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Lieutenant-Colonel Buchsenschutz, until recently Chef d'Etat-Major de la Région de Fez, to Capitaine Interprète André Truchet, and to Lieutenant Edgar Guérard Hamilton of the Quatrième Etrangère, for their generous co-operation in furnishing me with data concerning both the customs of the Berbers and life in the Foreign Legion, as well as its recent campaigns in the Tache de Taza and the Riff. Colonel Buchsenschutz has supplied me with much information by correspondence since I left Morocco, and Lieutenant Hamilton, the only American officer now in service with the Legion, has painstakingly read and corrected the manuscript while on active duty in the field.

I also desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to that invaluable handbook for all travellers in Morocco, Mr. Hamish McLaurin's "What About North Africa?"; to Mrs. Edith Wharton's "In Morocco," by far the most brilliant and colorful description of the "Moghreb" in the English language; and to Major Zinovi Pechkoff's stirring diary of his life in the Foreign Legion, "The Bugle Sounds," all of which I have used freely both as sources and for the verification of impressions already personally received in Morocco and the Atlas.

A. T.

THE HORNS OF RAMADAN

THE HORNS OF RAMADAN

I

"We're poor little lambs who've lost our way,
Baa! Baa! Baa!"

—"GENTLEMEN-RANKERS."

THE train was nearly an hour late and the bouquet of roses he had bought for her had already begun to wilt a little. He shifted them from one hand to the other, peering for the twentieth time down the track, but the shining rails prolonged themselves into an indefinite shimmering vacancy.

"Hooch" Googins, the red-faced baggage man, grinned sympathetically at the overgrown lad in the too-tight suit.

"Keep yer shirt on, Bub!" he admonished. "Ye won't hev to hang around more'n five minutes more for her!"

He knew, as did everybody else in Rome, why Robert Shafter was waiting so impatiently for the New York express. Nancy Vernon was coming home. Robert had rehearsed the meeting until he knew every step of what was going to happen from the moment the train stopped until he delivered her at her own front door. First the negro porter would jump down with Nancy's suit case, and then she herself would appear at the top of the steps looking quickly along the platform until she should catch

sight of him. Their eyes would meet; her face would light up; he would spring gallantly forward and place the bouquet in her hands:

"Welcome home, Nancy! It seems years since I last saw you!"

"O, Robert!" blushing a little.

Then he would take her elbow with a possessive air and guide her to the waiting motor. And when they reached the corner of Bellevue Avenue he would kiss her—maybe! Just the two of them! All others would have the good taste to keep away!

The bell outside the ticket office began to ring and a subdued humming rose from the rails beside him. In spite of the heat his fingers were cold and the blood in his eyes blurred the on-rushing engine as it thundered to a stop. He hurried toward the Pullman. Just as he had expected, a uniformed figure carrying Nancy's suit case leaped to the platform. It was not a negro's, however, but that of a trim young officer in unfamiliar, but exceedingly smart regimentals, who turned and extended his hand to the young lady behind him upon the steps. Robert found himself blocked by a wall of gray broadcloth as he tried to approach with his bouquet. It was perfectly evident that Nancy neither had returned alone, nor was she expecting anybody to meet her. Could she have forgotten? Or perhaps his letter had miscarried! She came gaily down the steps, laughing with some one in her wake, and he saw to his chagrin that she was already carrying a bouquet. Then the offi-

cer swung her to the platform with the same air of proprietorship that Robert had expected to use himself.

"Hello, Nancy!" he began faintly, but she did not see him and in the confusion his voice did not reach her.

"Where's Jim! Come on you old slow-poke! Hurry up, Larry!"

Two older and, as it seemed to Robert, stylishly dressed men had followed her. One of them handed the obsequious porter a dollar bill. She flashed a smile at her three escorts.

"Welcome to our metropolis—'The Eternal City!' " she said. "Sometimes known as 'the biggest little town in the middle west!' "

Robert shoved his way into the group grasping his bouquet. It had suddenly become tawdry.

"How do you do, Nancy!" he stammered.

They all turned and looked at him—superciliously it seemed.

"Why, Robert! You here!"

He held out his bouquet.

"Brought you some flowers."

"How nice!"

She looked vaguely at those already in her hands. Then without taking his offering she said:

"Captain Snayde—let me present Robert Shafter. These are my friends Mr. Porter and Mr. Masten, Robert. It was sweet of you to come to meet me.—How is your mother?"

He was staggered! Could this be the same Nancy that only five months ago had heard his tremulous avowal of eternal love and promised to be his forever—practically? He was forced to recognize the fact that she had not done so literally. However, she at least had not refused him. And she had certainly listened receptively about that lot on Hill-side Avenue.

"But we're both so young, Bobbie! We ought to wait. Neither of us is eighteen!"

It was only too true. And neither of them was eighteen even yet. Robert's birthday came in September. All the same she had let him kiss her. What more ought to be necessary to constitute an engagement? Not perhaps with some fly-by-night girl you had met a couple of times at a dance and were sitting out with, but Nancy and he had been keeping company ever since they could remember. What had come over her? The tone of her introduction had been tantamount to:

"Captain Snayde, this is my little friend Bobbie Shafter—one of the home town boys who used to rush me when I was a kid. He's a nice little fellow! Shake hands with Mr. Porter and Mr. Masten, Bobbie!—And *how* is your mam-ma?"

He shook hands grudgingly with "Jim" and "Larry"—Mr. Porter and Mr. Masten—and although his eyes topped theirs by a couple of inches he felt wormish and that he was being condescended to. "Larry"—Mr. Masten—was particularly offensive.

His airy "How are you, son!" would have justified manslaughter. Porter's "Hello, old man!" was almost worse. Had it not been for Nancy, Robert would have been inclined to punch their heads.

"Glad to meet you," he lied, trailing behind the party to the Vernon motor. Nancy's voice was shrill with excitement.

"Come sit here with me, Captain Snayde!" she called from the rear seat. "Jim, you and Larry can crowd in somewhere. It's only a step to the family castle!"

They piled in leaving Robert standing on the platform.

"Can't we give you a lift, Robert?" inquired Nancy. "Your house is right on the way. We'll drop you there.—You don't mind sitting in front with Sam?"

Robert climbed up beside the chauffeur. "Hooch" Googins, who had known Nancy since she wore long clothes, scratched his neck dubiously. He had missed her accustomed "Hello, Hooch!—How's everything with you?"

Robert did not join in the frivolity of the rear seat. He was conscious of a sense of sacrilege. Nancy had made a megaphone of her hands.

"This is Rome, ladies and gents. See it and die!" she declaimed. "Our financial district! On the right the Five Cent Savings Bank and the new court house—built in 1873,—on the left the public library, the Star Theatre, the shooting gallery, popcorn stand,

and our most famous citizen, Uncle Pete Barstow, the old geezer walking along there with the cane, born in 1835 and still going strong—We are now approaching the residential quarter!—This is Bellevue Avenue, famous for its elm trees, fudge parties, stone dogs, iron stags——”

What had come over her? Was this what happened when girls were sent off to New York’s “finishing” schools? It “finished” them all right! Who were these “Smart Alecs” she had picked up? Was she ashamed of her native place, of her friends, of—him?

“Stop at Mr. Shafter’s, Sam,” directed Nancy elegantly. “Thank you so much for coming to meet me, Bobbie!—See you soon!—Yes, home, Sam!”

They were gone, leaving him standing alone beside the front gate. Hot tears were in his eyes. Why,—why!—she had not even asked him to come to see her! With a swelling throat he felt for the latch and became aware of a something in his hand. He looked down. He was still holding the bouquet of roses.

They had cost three good dollars, but he did not want his parents to see them, and, as he passed the ash can below the back porch, he stuffed them into it. His mother, a subdued woman who seemed always on the point of saying something and then changing her mind, was standing in the kitchen talking to Mary, the hired girl.

“And be sure to have the waffles crisp, won’t you,

Mary? You know how particular Mr. Shafter is! He wants his waffles to be just so.—Hello, dear!” She followed Robert into the front hall. “Mr. West, the principal of the High School, was here to see me this afternoon,” she confided to him. “He says unless you do better you’ll never pass your college examinations. I haven’t told your father. I won’t, if you’ll try to do better. But I’m afraid you haven’t been working very hard, have you, dear?—Will you promise to try?”

Robert mumbled something unintelligible. In the darkness of the hall she could not see his face.

“Is anything the matter, dear?” she called after him as he clumped up the stairs.

“Nothing—at ALL!” he articulated, slamming the door of his room behind him. Then with a sob he threw himself face downward on his bed.

Mrs. Hiram W. Shafter, Robert’s mother, had always taken a certain pride in the fact that he was what, in her discussion club, was known as a “*problem child*.” His father regarded him as merely a subject for discipline. In point of fact he was just an exceptionally mature and imaginative boy who had fallen in love at an unusually early age. He was tall and muscular, with tawny curly hair that had a glitter in it, blue-gray eyes, and a plentiful crop of freckles, and no tailor could keep pace with his growing. He was fond of athletics and played on both the school nine and football team, but he hated the confinement and routine of regular study.

Poetry, history, romantic fiction and modern languages occupied the hours when he should have been grinding at Latin and trigonometry. His heroes were the Empire Builders and he knew Rudyard Kipling's Collected Verse by heart. He dreamed of exploration in the Tian-Shan and the Gobi, knew more about Llassa and Thibet than he did about his native State, and was constantly pestering his parents to send him to Labrador for a summer with Grenfell, to the Gallapagoes with Will Beebe, or at least to a ranch in Wyoming or Arizona,—a chronic case of "wanderlust," which irritated his father far more than if it had been just a plain cussedness which he could understand.

That Robert's interests should all be thus outside the town where his father had had so successful a career seemed to the latter all wrong. For to Hiram W. Shafter the United States was the universe, Rome his world, and himself the axis thereof. He had been its leading citizen for twenty years. He owned the Five Cent Savings Bank and the largest lumber mill on the Crawfish River within twenty miles; he was President of the Rotary Club and Chairman of the Republican County Committee, and he implicitly believed that all properly travelled roads led to Rome,—Ohio.

Like Edgar Rowland Sill's monad who lived in a globule of ditch water, he would have confidently challenged:

"There is no world beyond this certain drop. Show me another!"

He had always looked forward to taking Robert into the savings bank upon his graduation from the high school, and it was only Mrs. Shafter's urging that had led him to consider his son's going to college at all. The way that boy went mooning around making calf's eyes at girls like Nancy Vernon and yawping sentimental songs to his ukelele on the back porch in the evenings gave him a pain and he said so.

"Gentlemen-rankers out on a spree,
Damned from here to Eternity,
God ha' mercy on such as we,
Bah! Yah! Bah!"

A silly song! Why did a sensible boy sit there bleating like a sheep when he ought to have been studying for his college examinations? As a good Presbyterian, Mr. Shafter had doubts about the morality of the word "damned" in the second line, and suspected the phrase "God ha' mercy" in the third. And the books Robert read! Why didn't he read something like "Alsop's Practical Banker"? There was a book worth while!

Mrs. Shafter, who secretly sympathized with Robert's vagaries, felt constrained by conscience to support her husband. There had been a time in her early girlhood when she too had dreamed dreams and had had glimpses of a world limited by other confines than those of Union County. She had even once entertained an ambition to be a missionary. Privately she would have been delighted if Robert could have gone to Harvard, or even to Oxford, and

become a writer or possibly enter diplomatic life. But she loved her husband and had long since capitulated to his dogmatic plans for his son's career. All she said was:

"Don't you think it might do Robert good to go out west? It might make him a little less restless."

"Out west—nothing! What's the matter with right here? It's always been good enough for his father. You'll make a mollicoddle of that boy, giving in to him in everything," he warned her. "What he needs is good hard work!"

There are three "Romes" in the Buckeye State; two may easily be located, but the third, where the Shafters lived, appears on the map under another name. Its precise designation is a matter of little moment since it differs not a whit from a thousand other towns of approximately the same size in New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Indiana, and a stranger familiar with the others, should he drive down Bellevue Avenue from the new Soldiers' Monument to Central Square, would have difficulty in determining from his mere surroundings whether he were actually there or in Naples, Corinth, Athens or Sparta.

Built in the neo-classic period, it has wide elm shaded streets, trim white houses with fluted wooden pillars, gray marble steps and horse-blocks. At night the lamp-light streams comfortably across well-cared-for lawns from unshaded windows, through which the passer-by can gaze upon scenes of happy

domesticity about the radio, the Victrola, and even the now almost extinct melodeon. Not that Rome is in any way provincial or behind the times,—far from it! The New York morning papers are on sale at ten o'clock and the Star Theatre, which boasts a ten thousand dollar pipe organ, changes its programme three times a week. The Shafers were on intimate terms with South Sea Islanders, Hawaiian surf riders, Congo savages, the Northwest Mounted Police, Chicago hold-up men, and United States Senators; they knew exactly what an Alaskan mining camp, the Arc de Triomphe, an alligator farm, the Horse Guards, Vesuvius, the U. S. Naval Observatory, and the New York Stock Exchange looked like; and they could instantly recognize Charles A. Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Gene Tunney, Henry Ford, Mussolini, General Pershing, John D. Rockefeller or King George. In a word they and their fellow town-folk were cosmopolitans, educated—if not cultured—by virtue of the silver screen, at a trifling expense.

In spite of this, the Hon. Hiram W. Shafter maintained a poor opinion of all foreign countries and their inhabitants, particularly the French, whom he regarded as frivolous, shifty and immoral. It is quite possible that in his case the superficial and purely objective knowledge of the world gained from the movies, instead of broadening him may have tended in quite the opposite direction, and that familiarity with the hitherto unfamiliar may have bred in him a contempt for it. A little learning is said to be a

dangerous thing. Mr. Shafter had never had any strong desire to visit foreign lands and, now that he could see them all for fifteen cents, had none at all. He was convinced that the world was "a pretty small place" and that "people everywhere must be very much alike"—that is, like himself. In this he was both wrong and right.

Robert did not come down-stairs to supper. His mother, who had discovered the bunch of roses in the ash can, suspected the reason and forbore to call him. To her husband she made the excuse that the boy was not feeling well.

"I met Carrie Vernon up-street," he grunted. "She said Nancy got back from New York this afternoon. Dunno what's got into that woman. She's gone and got her hair bobbed and you can see her legs clear up to her knees. This hikin' 'round all over the lot simply ruins people. Why can't folks be satisfied to be as they are and stay put!"

Half an hour later Robert swung himself to the edge of his bed and sat up disconsolately. Everything in the room reminded him of Nancy. There were souvenirs of their companionship all about him, —the "Rome" flag carried proudly on their radiator to the county fair, a wasp's nest of sensitive memories, their 1923 class photograph at the High School, and the row of books they had read aloud together, including Tennyson, Kipling, Rupert Brooke. His ukelele! Why, he had sung to her by the hour out in the old lilac hidden summer house,—by sunset and

starlight! How sympathetically she had harkened to his yearnings for a life of action and adventure; how tenderly she had smiled when he had assured her that only her presence kept him from seeking his future in the wide world. She knew how the Red Gods called him! She knew the urge of the Everlasting Whisper! "Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look beyond the Ranges—" He had bared his naked soul to her! He had kissed her lips!

"O my God! She can't be going to chuck me like this!" he groaned. "She can't! She can't!—Maybe I imagined that she'd changed toward me! She didn't really do anything. Prob'ly she never got my letter and I took her by surprise!—After all," he philosophized bravely, "those fellows are her guests and she had to consider them first! I'll go over and drop in as if nothing had happened."

Nancy lived with her mother less than a block away on the other side of Bellevue Avenue, near enough in fact for Robert and her to signal to one another by raising and lowering the shades of their respective windows. Since her husband's death ten years before Mrs. Vernon had gone into semi-retirement, encouraging a virtuous belief that she had never recovered from it and that life could hold nothing further for her. She was a mild hypochondriac but, like that of many widows, her invalidism was due less to ill health than to a lack of intellectual resources. Nevertheless it had been enough to keep Nancy waiting upon her hand and foot during

her earlier years, with the result that she had rarely been away from home and, although by long odds the prettiest girl in Rome, had reached the age of seventeen without apparently having any consciousness of her attractiveness. She had been, if anything, too serious-minded and her knowledge of the other sex had been practically confined to Robert, who had satisfied every romantic ideal. They had moved along side by side, from class to class, first at the Grammar and then at the High School, and presumably would have graduated together that spring, had it not been for her mother's unexpected decision to send Nancy east for a final year in a fashionable boarding school.

Miss Penny's was one of those expensive educational hot-houses where the young ladies not only attend the opera and the theatre but enjoy what are mysteriously referred to as "social advantages." Here Nancy met a few older men and enjoyed the pleasurable sensation of arousing admiration in more than one of them at the same time. She began to think of Rome as provincial, and Mrs. Vernon herself, who had spent the winter in New York in order to be near her daughter, discovered that in spite of being forty-eight the world still held something for her and experienced what, had she ever had a first, might have been termed a second blooming. In a word, she awoke to the fact, as several thousands of American women have done, that she was a good-looking widow with a beautiful daughter. Rome, Ohio! Why not Rome, Italy?

Robert washed, brushed his hair and slipped down by the back stairs. It was nearly half past eight, and Nancy, who liked twilight, would probably be sitting on the front steps. He wouldn't let those city guys put it over him, by gosh! He'd sail right in and assert himself. He started across the mall courageously enough, whistling loudly so as not to take her a second time by surprise. But as he drew near he saw that the stoop was empty. Could she have gone out already? He'd ask for her, anyhow. But, as he quartered the front lawn to reach the bell, he saw through the lighted windows of the dining-room that she had not gone out. They were still at table and it looked like a dinner party. Nancy, radiant in a new frock, was sitting opposite her mother, while between them on either side were ranged the three visitors, two in dinner jackets and one in a full dress suit.

Robert stopped abruptly in his tracks. The fact that they were all in formal dress somehow made his ostracism even more definite than the occurrences at the station. For Robert had never owned either a dress suit or a Tuxedo. In Rome a "boiled shirt" and a "Sunday suit," or a blue serge coat with white flannel trousers, was considered quite enough regalia if one was asked out to supper, which usually was at seven o'clock in order to give the hired girl a chance to wash up. This was the final evidence of Nancy's apostasy. He felt both literally and metaphorically "in outer darkness" as he stood there gazing through the windows. Grinding his teeth Robert turned on

his heel and walked back across Bellevue Avenue. His father was sitting on the piazza smoking a cigar.

"Hello, Bub," he said suspiciously. "I thought your mother said you weren't feeling well."

"I wasn't," answered Robert with a faint glow of gratitude for his mother's mendacity. "I'm all right now. I just thought I'd get a breath of air."

"Been over to Nancy's?" pursued Mr. Shafter.

"I walked by there—I didn't go in. She's got visitors and they were still at supper."

Mr. Shafter flipped the ash from his cigar into the adjacent honeysuckle.

"Sooner you quit foolin' 'round Nancy Vernon the better," he announced. "I know she's a nice girl and all that, but she's grown up now old enough to marry, while you're only a boy. Her mother's goin' to give her a comin' out party in the autumn, she tells me, an' next winter she'll make her derbew in Washington. She's years too old for you. Why, you ain't even graduated from High School yet. You've got your hands full studyin' for your college examinations. An' I tell you right now," he added vehemently, "this is your last chance! I don't take any stock in fancy education. If you flunk you'll go to work in the bank July first! Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Robert telephoned Nancy next day and received her cordial assurance that she would "love to see him any time," but she was hazy as to making dates, and on such occasions as he did find her at home she was

never alone, Messrs. Porter, Masten and Snayde making it obvious that they considered him of not the slightest consequence socially or otherwise. Even had they not ignored him he would have found it hopeless to attempt to compete in conversations centring about New York musical shows, cabarets, and bootlegging. The two civilians were graduates of, or had at least attended, eastern universities, a fact which momentarily weakened Robert's zest for higher education. Just how Captain Snayde functioned in the military life he never discovered. It was, however, apparently enough to justify his wearing a uniform. They spent their time when not in the motor lolling about on the lawn smoking cigarettes, walking down to the square for news of the latest sporting events, and jollyng their hostess and her daughter, with both of whom they seemed to be on intimate terms, in a jargon wholly unintelligible to an outsider.

Robert, baffled, gave up the unequal contest, recognizing that for the time being at least Nancy was too engrossed in her new "men" friends to pay any attention to him. But his mind remained so full of her that he was wholly unable to study and when the examinations came he flunked them all abysmally.

"If I didn't know to the contrary I should have said from his papers that the boy was a goop!" declared Principal West to Robert's father. "Yet he's kept near the head of his class ever since he's been at the High School. I don't understand it.—Why don't you let him tutor this summer——"

"Tutor nothin'!" retorted Mr. Shafter picking up his hat.

"Well, I'm certainly sorry!—It's a great disappointment," said the principal. "Robert is a very unusual boy."

"It's no disappointment to me!" affirmed Robert's father drily. "Now he can go to work and make something of himself."

But in spite of himself his face when he returned home showed chagrin.

"Please don't be too hard on Robert, Hiram!" begged Mrs. Shafter waylaying her husband before his evening interview with the culprit. "I'm sure he did the best he could. Everybody knows that college examinations are ever so much harder than they used to be."

"Don't you worry, Mattie," he replied. "I'll not be too hard on him. I've a hunch that this is the best thing that ever happened to the boy. It'll wake him up and make him see things as they are."

"You mean as you think they are!" she almost retorted, but she only said: "Well, don't forget that he's sensitive and high-strung. You might make him desperate——!"

"Desperate nothin'!" snorted her husband. "It's time he realized that there's something in life besides dreaming about girls and reading cheap novels."

It was an unfortunate moment for Mr. Shafter to have selected, for in addition to the conscious disgrace of having flunked his examinations, Robert

was quivering with resentment over his treatment by Nancy.

"Come in here, Robert. I want to talk to you!"

Robert knew the tone. It was the one used by Mr. Shafter in earlier years preliminary to spanking. He set his jaw and followed his father into the stuffy little library containing in addition to the "Memorial History of Columbus, Ohio," a plaster cast of Daniel Webster and a glass dome encasing a stuffed woodpecker, all of which treasures his father had acquired in liquidation of otherwise uncollectible debts.

Mr. Shafter sat down on a horse-hair covered arm chair and regarded his son with the visage of one who has suffered a recent bereavement. Robert was getting more and more nervous. Nancy was having a party that evening and she had just telephoned to ask him to bring his ukelele and help out with a few songs. He had, for a moment, entertained the thought of an abrupt refusal, but her voice had sounded so sweet over the wire that he had capitulated.

"Aren't you ever going to give me a chance to see you alone, Nancy?" he besought her. "You've been back home ten days and I've not laid eyes on you once by yourself."

"But Bob! I've been so busy with my guests and the party and everything!"

"I should think you could have given me a few minutes!—O, well! Never mind! What do you want me to sing?"

"Any of your favorite songs. The Kipling ones, I

guess. 'Mandalay' or 'The Gypsy Trail' or 'Gentlemen-Rankers.' You do them all so well, I'm sure any one of them would make a hit."

"All right," he agreed, for he could refuse her nothing. "I'll be over!" Then he had gone to the library to receive sentence.

"Mr. West tells me you have failed all your examinations, Robert! What have you got to say for yourself?"

Robert steadily returned his father's gaze.

"I don't know as I can say anything. I did the best I could. I've been kind of upset lately," he answered.

He avoided explaining why, conscious that it would only the more excite his father's wrath. Mr. Shafter cleared his throat. He did not enjoy lecturing Robert; he did so only because he regarded it as his paternal duty.

"Well, I have a good deal to say!" he began. "The trouble with you, Robert, is that—" and for some twenty minutes Robert listened to what was the trouble with him. He was, it appeared—at least in his father's opinion—lazy, unambitious, and inefficient, and he would never amount to a—h'm—anything unless he gave up all his crazy ideas about going off to China or the South Sea Islands and what all, an' quit playing the ukelele an' readin' poetry an' trashy novels an' realized that it was time for him to go to work and become self-supporting. He was a trifler without even enough serious purpose to get into college. He was, in effect, a silly, half-baked kid.

Well, he had had his chance and lost it. On July the first he could start in as a messenger at the Five Cent Savings Bank at six dollars per week.

For a moment Robert stretched his hand after the vanishing dream of a university education.

"Couldn't I work all summer and maybe pass the exams in the autumn?—I'd like to try!" he urged timidly.

"You've had all the chance you're goin' to have," retorted his father. "It's prob'ly a good thing you didn't get into college. It would just ha' meant four more years of dawdlin' around Cambridge or New Haven studyin' botany and fine arts, singin' college songs and yellin' 'Ra-Ra-Ra!' I've yet to see a college graduate I'd want to give a job to! No, to work you go. And, if you stick at it, sometime you may be a credit to us yet.—I hope so. That's all I have to say!"

Mr. Shafter took up the evening *Inquirer* and adjusted his spectacles as an indication that the interview was at an end. He had no conception that a little sympathy, a little attempt at understanding the vague stirrings in the boy's heart would have meant more to Robert at that moment,—do more to make a man of him,—to make him a credit to his native town,—than the most convincing of moral disquisitions.

With feet of lead Robert climbed to his room for his ukelele. From his window he could see the motors rolling up, one after another, to the Vernons'

door. He had always regarded it as a second home; now it seemed to him a house of strangers. For the first time in his life he wondered if he were properly apparelled for an evening party. Oughtn't one to own a dress suit when one was nearly eighteen? He noticed in the mirror that his coat collar did not conceal his tie and that the sleeves were too short! He could hardly button it across. Never mind! If Nancy really cared for him she would overlook any small deficiencies in dress.

He was more than conscious of these deficiencies, however, as he entered the Vernon parlor, which was already crowded with his acquaintances. Nancy stood between the windows beside her mother, who looked weirdly youthful with a new permanent wave of the latest Parisian cut. The three long-tailed out-of-town gallants, magnificent in white waistcoats and towering collars with sea-gull's wings, were entertaining a group of highly flattered young ladies close by. He was aware of being the object of humorous comment as carrying his ukelele under his arm he approached to shake hands with his hostess, for they stopped talking and he thought he heard Mr. Porter murmur something like "Buster Brown."

"It is so nice of you to bring your ukelele!" whispered Nancy, pressing his hand. "We shall need something to hold the crowd until the band arrives. Jackson promised to be here at ten o'clock and it's already half past. Wasn't it nice of Robert, Mother?"

"Yes, indeed!" echoed Mrs. Vernon abstractedly.

"What do you suppose is keeping them! I'll go telephone once more."

She moved toward the door.

"In trouble, Mrs. Vernon?" inquired Mr. Masten, pulling a waxed end of moustache. "Anything I can do for you?"

"The music hasn't come!" she explained.

"I thought it was here!" he replied with a quizzical glance at the ukelele.

Robert turned red. His collar was like an iron band about his neck. He felt all hands, feet and head.

"O, I'm sure Robert would be glad to play for us!" said his hostess.

"Please, not yet!" he stammered despairingly to Mrs. Vernon. "Later maybe——"

"Robert sings so beautifully!" put in one of the girls beside Captain Snayde.

"Come on, old sport! Sing for us!" mocked Mr. Porter.

Nancy touched his arm. On her face was her most engaging smile. Her tone was more nearly tender than it had been at any time since her return.

"Please, Robert!—It's the only thing that will keep the party from being a flop! Just one song, or two at the most."

He hesitated, his forehead damp with embarrassment. He made no pretense of being able to sing, but these Smart Alecs had got his goat! And anyway he would have committed murder had Nancy requested it.

He turned to her.

"If I do, will you promise to have a talk with me to-night just by ourselves?" he challenged.

"Any time you ask me before the party is over."

"All right. Then I'll sing!"

The next instant he regretted it, but too late.

"Listen everybody!" called Nancy triumphantly. "The band is late, so Robert Shafter has kindly consented to sing a few songs to fill up the time."

Mr. Masten clapped loudly, so did Mr. Porter and Captain Snayde. Robert had never felt so conspicuous in his life as Nancy pulled a chair into the centre of the room while the others made a circle about him. His nerve was oozing rapidly away, but he sat down and strummed a few chords. What should he sing? In the rear of the crowd he could see the supercilious grins of the New Yorkers. Damned stuffed shirts! He'd show them! "I'll give 'em 'Gentlemen-Rankers!'" he thought. It was one of Nancy's favorite songs and he had always got a thrill out of it.

From the pantry rose the metallic voice of Mrs. Vernon.

"I guess you better!—You promised to be here at ten o'clock!"

A snicker swept the circle. It was an ill augury.

"Ssh! Everybody!" ordered Nancy. Robert closed his eyes.

"To the le-gion of the lost ones, to the co-hort of the damned,
To my breth-ren in their sor-rows over-seas—"

he began in a sentimental quaver. The guests in front were listening respectfully.

“We’re poor little lambs who’ve lost our way,
Baa! Baa! Baa!
We’re little black sheep who’ve gone astray,
Baa-aa-aa!’”

sang Robert plaintively.

“Baa-aa-aa!” came in a suppressed bleat from the back row. Doggedly he kept on.

“We have done with Hope and Honor, we are lost to
Love and Truth,
We are dropping down the ladder rung by rung,
And the measure of our torment is the measure of our
youth,
God help us, for we knew the worst too young!
We’re poor little lambs who’ve lost our way,
Baa! Baa! Baa!’”

“Baa! Baa!” rose jeeringly from the rear. There was a titter—followed by laughter. Much as they all sympathized with Robert they could not help it. “Baa-aa-aa!” Even Nancy smiled. “Baa-aa-aa!” It was contagious.

Robert finished in a chorus of bleats, conscious of having made a fool of himself in spite of the applause. That Nancy also should have found him ridiculous was more than he could bear. Blinded by tears he arose indignantly and thrust his way to the front porch, out into the sheltering darkness of the lawn. The negroes with their saxophones were just tumbling up the steps. “Baa-aa-aa!” floated

through the open window in a tone easily recognizable as belonging to Mr. Porter. Should he go back and knock his block off? No, that would only make matters worse. How could Nancy have stood for having him so insulted? He could see her marshalling the band in the conservatory. A moment and they were in full blast. He'd have it out with her there and now, once and for all. She'd promised——

He stepped to the window just inside of which she was, for the instant, standing.

"Nancy!"

She saw him and nodded.

"Come out here a minute!"

"O, Robert! I can't—I've got to start the dancing!"

"You promised!"

The look on his face was tragic.

"All right, if you insist!"

A gleam at the door, a rustle on the grass, and she was beside him. He seized her by the wrist and pulled her away from the light.

"What is it?" she demanded trying to free herself.

"Listen, Nancy! Why are you so mean to me! How could you let that ass Porter make small of me in your own house? And you even laughed at me yourself! I saw you!"

"I'm sorry, Robert! Honestly I couldn't help it. They didn't mean any harm. You must admit it was funny!"

"Funny!—*Funny!*"

He was staggered.

"Yes, funny! Please let go my wrist. You hurt."

"So you think I'm funny!—Look here, Nancy! I've stood all I'm going to. Ever since you came back you've acted as if I was dirt under your feet—paid no attention to me whatever. I want to know where I stand. Are we engaged or aren't we?"

"Engaged!"

"Sure! Engaged. Just that!"

"Why, Robert!"

"You don't mean you were just foolin' with me all that time? Think of the books we read together and our walks and everything. How about Hillside Avenue?"

"I never said a thing about Hillside Avenue!—You know perfectly well that when you asked me to be engaged to you I said that we—that you were entirely too young."

He croaked bitterly.

"Rats! I guess you wouldn't think I was too young if you hadn't gone off to New York and got your head turned by meeting a lot of slick dudes——"

"I won't have you speak that way of my men friends!"

"Men!"

"Yes, men. That's more than you are."

"A lot of soft slob."

She tore herself from his grasp.

"If anybody's a slob it's you! You're just a silly,

sentimental boy,—jealous because I've got some friends who are men of the world and know something about life. Why should you expect me to want to marry you? What do you amount to? You can't even get into college! With all your big talk, if you're such a man why don't you do something to show it!" She was half crying.

He stepped back a little, cut to the quick.

"So that's what you think of me!" His voice was strained. "Then—we're not engaged?"

"I should say *not!*"

"All right then!"

He picked up the ukelele which had fallen on the grass, turned on his heel and walked stiffly across the lawn. Nancy stared after him. He was already half way to the street.

"Robert!" she called faintly. But he did not hear her.

At that moment he neither heard nor saw anything. His universe had crashed and gone down, like an ocean liner which has struck an iceberg, leaving him in a black, soundless void. For two weeks he had fought against the realization that Nancy had changed toward him, had made excuses for her, had argued with himself in her defense. He had refused to believe it. Now he knew that it was true. She loved some one else. She was through with him. She had definitely given him the mit. All his hopes of happiness were gone. He would have been glad to go into the bank at six dollars a week if only he

could have looked forward to marrying her sometime. He would have slaved, waited, anything! But now——!

He banged against a tree trunk in the middle of the Mall. In the ensuing pause he looked back across Broadway at the Vernons'. He could see the shadows of the couples as they flitted past the windows. She was in there now dancing without a thought of him—fox-trotting no doubt gaily in the arms of Captain Snayde. Snayde! Who the hell was Snayde? Uniforms! It wasn't his fault that he had been too young to go to the War. He had been only ten years old! He had wanted to go badly enough, but they didn't have drummer boys now the way they used to. If he'd gone he'd bet Nancy wouldn't have jilted him that way! He'd have had a chance to show whether he was just the half-baked kid his father had called him. He didn't feel like a kid! Perhaps there was some truth in what his father had said about Nancy being too old for him. Anyhow she was old enough to marry if she wanted to, and she was clearly bent on doing it. All Rome knew that he had been in love with her ever since they were children. He felt that he could not survive the humiliation of the announcement of her engagement to another—to one of those others who had treated him so like dirt!

As he stood stock still in the darkness of the Mall his cheeks still burned at the recollection of the way they had jeered at him half an hour before. "Baa-aa-

aa!" They should never have a chance to do so again! He would go away, leave Rome forever! The thought of that job in the bank was intolerable. His father did not understand him anyhow, and his mother—well, she was too much afraid of the old man. Lazy, inefficient, unambitious was he? What chance had he ever had? Rome was just a bum, one-horse little town. He'd show them whether he was lazy and unambitious! He had nothing to keep him there a moment longer. They should hear of him all right, all right. If he came back with a lot of money his father would feel very differently about him. And Nancy—she'd be sorry for what she had done to him! Maybe he'd be wearing a uniform himself, a real one! He could falsify his age easily enough and join the army. There was always fighting going on somewhere. He could join "the legion of the lost ones, the cohort of the damned"—become one of the "gentlemen-rankers" of whom he had so often sung. The Foreign Legion! Why not? That was where all those whom Dostoevski called "the insulted and injured" found a refuge.

He crossed the lawn to his own house and entered by the porch door. A single light was burning in the hall and he tiptoed up the back stairs. His father and mother would be sound asleep by that time, and anyhow they would not expect him home for a couple of hours yet. It would serve them right!

Luckily he had money. All winter he had saved his allowance as well as everything he could earn at odd

jobs in order to give Nancy a good time when she came home. Thanks to her apostasy the fund was still intact—sixty-five dollars. He took it from its hiding place and counted it. You could do a lot on sixty-five dollars! In the closet was a battered suit case and into it he piled his sweater, some underclothes, a few jimcracks, and the Bible given him by his mother. The feel of it in his hand gave him a twinge of remorse. Poor mother! She would miss him. He couldn't go without leaving some word for her. He sat down at his desk.

“Dear Mother,” he wrote, “I’ve decided to go away where I’ll have a better chance. Nobody here thinks I’m any good and I guess they’re right. I couldn’t stand going into the bank. Anyhow I’m going to try a fresh start. I’ve taken my Lizzie and I have plenty of money, so you needn’t worry about me. Love to Dad. Affectionately, Bob.”

He folded this and addressed it, placing it carefully where she would be sure to find it. There was nothing to keep him longer. His eye swept the walls. No use taking any old trash! On the bureau stood a cabinet photograph of Nancy taken before she went to New York. Under a momentary impulse he unfastened it from the frame and thrust it into his inside breast pocket. She would never know and—well, she had been really fond of him once. Then with his suit case in one hand and his ukelele in the

other he stole down-stairs and out to the shed where he kept his second-hand Ford. Loosening the brake he pushed the car silently to the street.

For a moment he stood there looking up at the windows of his mother's room. Was he treating her right to go off that way without even bidding her good-by? Why not wait until next day? He hesitated. Just then, carried by the wind across the Mall, came from the Vernons' the lilt of a jazz tune that he himself had handed along to Jackson—one of "Ukelele Ike's."

"Good-by, good-by, come back to me never!
You can fall or trip, or even bust your hip,
Babe! It's all the same to me!"

Robert hesitated no longer.

"All righty!" he snorted; and giving the crank-handle a vicious yank he started the car and jumped in.

"It's all the same to me, too!" he muttered as he stepped on the gas.

Robert's stand-and-deliver-take-them-or-leave-them conditions had brought Nancy sharply to her senses. She had always cared for him and was now perfectly aware that she still did so. Her six months in New York had simply gone to her head and left her with the impression that she was an exceptional and superior being, in which attitude she had been encouraged by her mother. Robert's readiness to help her out as a volunteer at the party had genuinely touched her. She was already a little bored by

her new companions, her conscience accused her of having inexcusably neglected him, and when he had delivered his ultimatum she was already upon the point of resuming her former happy relationship. But the abruptness of his demand, and his insistence that she should immediately climb down from her high horse and accept him as her acknowledged lover and future husband was too much for her pride. Had Robert wept she would doubtless have put her arms about his neck; but since he saw fit to assume a masterful air her natural reaction was to send him to the devil. Having done so, however, she yearned to summon him back. The thought that she had really wounded him was more than she could bear.

"Robert!" she called once more, although he had by this time disappeared into the shadows of the Mall. She waited expectantly pulling at her handkerchief.

"All right, then!" she cried biting her lip. "Have it your own way!" And then in a manner most contradictory to her haughtiness burst into tears.

Even this qualified consolation was denied her by the appearance of a search party, despatched by her watchful mother, and consisting of Messrs. Snayde and Porter for both of whom with equal inconsistency she now suddenly conceived a violent dislike. Accordingly she backed into the shadow of a lilac bush, walked around the kitchen wing and, approaching the house from the opposite direction, re-entered it by the side door. Mrs. Vernon spotted her at once.

"Where on earth have you been, Nancy?"

"I just stepped out on the lawn for a minute to say good-night to Robert," she explained. "He felt so badly about the way everybody made fun of him that he's gone home. He was all upset."

"What nonsense!" sniffed Mrs. Vernon. "I hope you told him he was a silly boy. Nobody made fun of him! Quite to the contrary!"

"Yes they did, Mother!" retorted Nancy. "We were all perfectly horrid to him! I thought the way Jim Porter acted was just too mean!—I wouldn't have blamed Robert if he had knocked him down," she added defiantly.

"Knocked him down! I'd like to see Robert knock him down! I guess it would be the other way round!"

"You talk as if Robert was nothing but a baby!" cried Nancy with sudden fire. "He's a great deal more mature than most men of his age."

"He's more of a baby than he is a man if he can't stand having a little fun poked at him. However, I'm sorry if he felt hurt.—Here comes Mr. Porter. Now do be nice to him!"

But Nancy was not at all nice to Mr. Porter; neither was she to Captain Snayde or Mr. Masten; and when the party broke up she did not linger to talk it over but immediately went up-stairs to her room after the most perfunctory of "good-nights." As she recalled the occurrences of the evening she saw herself as a very trivial young person, and, with equal clearness, the fundamental worth of the boy she had rendered miserable by her indifference and neglect.

Like Robert's the walls of her room were hung with mementos of their friendship. He had always been loyal and devoted. These so-called "men-of-the-world" whom she had imported from New York were not to be compared with him. She wished they were all leaving the next day. In any event, she resolved, she would thereafter see as much of Robert as of them.

She went to the window and looked out across the Mall. The band had gone home and all the lights down-stairs had been put out. Bellevue Avenue was dark save for a single yellow square—the window of Robert's room. Could he still be up? And then she noticed that the curtain had been pulled in such a way that it registered in their now abandoned code the words, "Hello, Nancy!" Had he waited up until the party should be over just to show her that there was no ill feeling? How sweet of him! Quickly she pulled down her own shade in answer. A few seconds more and he would begin to signal to her in the Morse Code. She would ask him to come over after breakfast and take a walk with her. Everything would be made up.

But Robert's curtain remained motionless. No signals came from the window across the Mall. Through the heavy foliage of the elms it gleamed like a reproachful eye. What could he be doing at that time of night? He could hardly have fallen asleep with the light turned on. Was he ill? Could he have—? The perspiration dampened her fore-

head. Boys did such foolish things sometimes! She undressed slowly, put on her wrapper and sat down at the window watching the light across the way. Something had happened to Robert and, whatever it was, she was responsible for it! After an hour, as no change had taken place, she put out her own light and went to bed with a leaden heart.

Robert, in his flivver, drove through the sleeping countryside under the sickly light of a gibbous moon. Now that he was actually off he began to feel a sense of freedom such as he had never before experienced. For the first time in his life he was on his own, accountable to nobody, the world before him. Day-break found him on the outskirts of Wheeling, and he joined a group of iron-workers who were making their breakfast off coffee and crullers at a lunch car. The sun rose as he bowled down the highroad toward Pittsburgh, where he had an early lunch, and although the car began to give unmistakable signs of exhaustion while crossing the Alleghanies, he made Harrisburg by eight o'clock that evening.

Next morning the motor refused to start, but he overhauled his magneto and managed to get as far as Allentown. Here the flivver definitely and irrevocably gave up its mechanical ghost, and he left it in exchange for his night's lodging and took to the train. After all it had only cost him twenty-three dollars and he had run it nearly two years.

On the third evening after leaving Rome, Ohio,

Robert found himself staring for the first time at the lights of Broadway. Had it not been for the fifty dollars in his pocket he would have been overwhelmed at the rumbling vastness of the city and the confusion about him, but he had already conceived a definite plan of operations, which he proceeded without delay to put into effect. He knew vaguely that the French Foreign Legion, while scattered in various places over the globe, served for the most part in Africa. Inquiry at the French Consulate revealed that enlistments could be made in any sizeable city in France, at Algiers or Oran in Algeria, and at Casablanca or Rabat in Morocco. Once enlisted he would be given free transportation to Sidi Bel Abbès, in Algeria, the chief depot or headquarters of the Legion, the first regiment of which was always stationed there. If he went to France first he would only have to go to Africa afterwards. Why make two bites of the cherry? To Africa, then, he must go; but it was a long way off and his funds would not permit the purchase of a steamship ticket of whatever class.

From the list of proposed sailings published in the newspapers he ascertained that most of the steamers on the Mediterranean route stopped at Algiers. The cheapest third-class fare was seventy-five dollars, and Robert's balance was now but forty. Clearly the only way to get across the ocean was to work his passage. For several days he loitered about the piers until at length he scraped acquaintance with a young

Scandinavian gatekeeper who gave him the information for which he was looking. There was no use trying to ship on any of the Italian or French boats, his new friend told him, since they would not take Americans, but he ought to be able to get some sort of a berth on the "Columbia," of the United States Line, which had just been transferred to the southern route. He offered to take Robert to the Barge Office on Bowling Green and help him get a seaman's passport and then to speak a word in his behalf to the Port Captain whose task it was to enroll crews for the different vessels.

The United States Shipping Commissioner at the Barge Office asked Robert no questions. Any one could see that he was an American, which was apparently the only prerequisite, and he found himself at once listed as a deck steward upon the "Columbia," which sailed for Gibraltar two days later. He had never been at sea before and had expected to be very ill, but luckily the ocean proved calm, the quarters were clean, and the number of passengers small. So far everything had gone well with him. Already he felt years older than when he had left home. He had given his age as twenty-two and nobody seemed disposed to question it, treating him on the contrary in every respect as if he were a responsible human being of adult years. The work was easy and as yet he had had no time to be homesick.

He knew nothing about the Foreign Legion except its reputation for being the hardest fighting body of men in the world; but the thought of drop-

ping his identity and losing himself in a gallant army of semi-outlaws under the flag of France, fighting the Arab amid the sands of the Sahara appealed to his sense of romance. Out there in those desert wastes, fought over before the birth of Christendom, he could satisfy at one and the same time the instinct inherent in every youth to play the part of soldier, bandit, cowboy and crusader. What if the life were arduous and full of danger? All the more glory, all the more chance to prove himself a man. Suppose he should fall pierced by an Arab bullet? Better to die gloriously in battle than of appendicitis in a Five Cent Savings Bank! When at last on the morning of the ninth day out he saw hanging in the sky what he took to be clouds and then discovered to be mountains, he experienced one of the great emotions of his life. The Atlas! Mysterious, menacing, inscrutable barrier between his life that had been and his life to be! What secrets lay behind that tawny wall of arid peaks?

The "Columbia" dropped the mails at Gibraltar and then crossed to Algiers. She was due to lie inside the breakwater for eight hours and, along with others of the crew, he was able to secure shore leave. Under his baggy sailor-togs he had put on the suit he had worn on leaving home. In his pockets he stuffed as many of his smaller possessions as he could. The ukelele was his chief concern. It might excite suspicion, he feared, but he wrapped it in a piece of newspaper and took it along, prepared to explain, if questioned, that he intended to pawn it. Once in the

barge with the blue strip widening between him and the "Columbia" he experienced his first sinking of heart, for he realized that he was now actually breaking his last remaining tie with his native country. Yet even then he did not falter. Ten minutes later he climbed upon the quay and evading his companions made his way into the city and boarded a tram marked "Mustapha Supérieur" which carried him to the heights above the town.

The sunlight was dazzling, the breeze off the Mediterranean cool and fragrant with the odor of pomegranates and roses from the gardens beneath. To the south lay range upon range of tumbled hills. East and west stretched the green African coast spotted with tiny cubes of white below which the surf creamed upon curving shores.

He walked inland for an hour or two, ate at an inn, slept for awhile in a grove by the roadside, and returned at sunset to his point of vantage above Algiers. Until the "Columbia" should have sailed he did not dare re-enter the city. From where he sat he could look down directly upon the harbor where the great steamer with the Stars and Stripes flying from her masthead lay inside the breakwater, the smoke rising in clouds from her funnels. Her nose was already pointed seaward. A couple of bumboats hung alongside, but her gangplank was up. Why didn't she start? Had they missed him? Were they combing the alleys of the Arab quarter for him even then?

Below him the red and white terraces with their

tree-tops descended like an amphitheatre to the water's edge. At that distance the noises of the city were subdued to a soft hum. For an instant the white walls seemed to gleam even more brightly, the blue above to intensify, then, as the golden bead on the horizon vanished, a veil of gossamer was drawn across the sky. Swiftly—more swiftly than he had ever known at home—it grew dark. Everywhere on the hill above him lights began to twinkle. The "Columbia" blazed like a floating dance hall. There was nothing now in the west but a red smear over a heaving purple plain. A cool wind eddied along the hillside. He was glad he had on two suits!

Almost imperceptibly the cluster of lights that was the "Columbia" crept along the mole. Then faster. She was stepping along lively now! Her wake made a great half circle that shone white against the blackness of the harbor. They had gone without him. He was alone in Africa!



II

*Soldats de la Légion,
De la Légion Etrangère,
N'ayant pas de nation,
La France est votre Mère.*

THE song halted and gasped above the dust-choked line which, without pretense of order, staggered along the blinding *piste* toward Bou Kemkem. At sunset the desert would be green and gold; now it was a molten fiery furnace, with men walking in it—but not unscathed.

Robert, his face burned black, his lips cracked, his eyes swollen and inflamed, tried to join in the chorus, but only a hoarse grunt came from his parched throat. He had reached that state of fatigue when one tends to become light-headed, numb to any pain less sharp than the sun-spears that drove so pitilessly down into his brain through his *képi*, only to jump up again, reflected from the glassy sand, against his scorched lids. The soles of his heavy *brodequins* were like live coals, his rifle barrel a glowing steel billet. The world shivered aghast at the heat that everywhere streamed upward in wavering lines behind the incandescent veil that hung over the battalion.

The legionary at Robert's right, a round-shouldered, bow-legged, little man known as "Pepin le

Grand," suddenly whinnied, yawing in his stride. With both hands he tore open his shirt.

"Jesus, Marie, Jesus, Marie!" he groaned. "I can stand it no longer! I can't see!"

His eyes were rolled up so that only the whites showed. Robert wondered if he were going *maboul*. He had seen plenty of them crack in the past two months. It was just a question of time before you went loony, anyway. Sooner or later *le cafard* got you, no matter what. But Pepin—! Good little Pepin——!

"I'll carry your rifle," he said. "Give it to me."

Pepin let him take it without looking at him.

"Jesus, Marie, Jesus, Marie! I am dying!" whimpered Pepin le Grand.

"Stop your noise!—*Mache schnell!*" ordered the corporal.

Robert instinctively straightened, no easy matter in his heavy overcoat, or *capote*, and with a tightly packed, wooden-framed, sixty-pound pack on which were strapped a blanket, an extra pair of *brodequins*, a tent section with collapsible pole and pegs, and a frying pan, while around his middle was the *ceinture bleue*—a woollen sash a foot wide and four yards long to protect him from sudden changes in temperature, and over his coat a "*ceinturon*," or broad leather belt, to which were fastened three leather pockets containing forty cartridges each, a sword bayonet with steel scabbard,—and two water bottles or *bidons*, holding two quarts each. Thus ac-

coured and carrying well over a hundred pounds, he had already marched thirty kilometers since sunrise.

"Jesus—Marie!"

Little Pepin lurched out of the ranks and pitched heavily upon the sand. The corporal hurried up and joined the group gathered about him.

The whistle blew and an order sang down the column.

"*Compagnie, halte!*"

What were they to do with him? They could not carry him, but he could not be left to die. There were no wagons and the mules were already overloaded. But it is a point of honor with the Legion never to leave a wounded man behind. A young mounted officer with a serious face and intense sad eyes came galloping back. Major Zinovi Pechkoff, beloved of his men, had lost his right arm—and still fought. He leaped down and bent over the exhausted man.

"What's the trouble, *mon petit?*"

"I am dying, *Mon Commandant.*"

Major Pechkoff bent down and whispered in his ear so that the others could not hear. "*Courage, mon vieux!* It is not so bad! I will give you my horse. You shall ride the rest of the way."

Pepin le Grand opened his eyes. Over his brown-stained, corrugated features spread, in place of the agony, a look almost of adoration. Slowly he raised himself.

"*Merci non, Mon Commandant!*" he protested resolutely. "I—I cannot ride before all the comrades who must march! I can go on!"

Major Pechkoff nodded to him and smiled. "*Ça c'est du courage, mon ami! Allons!*" He galloped ahead to his place in the column. Again the whistle.

"*Gardez-vous! Sacs au dos! Armes à la bretelle! En avant! Marche!*" And they stumbled on again in the breathless heat.

"*Un-deux! Un-deux! Un-deux!*" Pepin le Grand began to sing in a cracked but resolute voice. The others took it up:

*"Soldats de la Légion,
De la Légion Etrangère,
N'ayant pas de nation,
La France est votre Mère."*

"*Un-deux! Un-deux!*"

The song changed to "Anne Marie"—in German. All of the marching songs were in that tongue. Most of the non-coms and seventy per cent of the men were Germans who had served the Kaiser during the Great War,—Spartacists driven out of the country or ultramonarchists who would not acknowledge the Republic. Many had held commissions, grizzled warriors of the General Staff or Imperial Guard, splendid officers when not drunk, which they inevitably were on the first and fifteenth of each month. Then stand from under!—unless they became maudlin sentimental, singing "The Old Village Schoolmaster,"

and like ditties, with the tears streaming down their cheeks.

Robert's aptitude for languages had stood him in good stead, but even so his limited knowledge of the prevailing tongue, and his unfamiliarity with their idiom had made him a constant butt for bullying corporals and sergeants, "put upon" for extra detail of fatigue duty, without which his life would have been sufficiently a hell.

For hell it was and had been, both by day and by night from the very first. *Un-deux! Un-deux!* The pain in his head came and went, came and went. Was he going *maboul* too? Would he presently throw down his rifle and with a scream stagger zigzagging out upon that pitiless ocean of sand among vipers and scorpions until he collapsed to die of thirst, without even a wooden cross or a whitewashed stone to mark where he had fallen? The graves of the legionnaires blossom in Northern Africa like the cacti; for many, the jackal is the only undertaker. One of their songs runs:

*"Et quand nous nous serons cassé le cou,
Il n'y aura personne devant notre trou
Pour dire des prières.
Mais les jackals qui nous croquent les os,
Diront qu'ils ont rudement de poil aux dos,
Aux légionnaires."*

Only the night before, Kurtz, a big Austrian on sentry duty, had been found with his throat cut and

his body stripped naked by marauders who had stolen upon him soundlessly in the darkness. His own turn might come to-night! *Un-deux! Un-deux!* Oh, for a drop of water—water—water! His bottles had been empty since noon. The cool blue lake that lay just beyond the neighboring dunes was not there at all! It was a mirage, its verdant islands lapped by rippling waves, its groves of trees nothing but near-by furze bushes magnified monstrously by the heat. *Un-deux! Un-deux!*

Back home the leaves would have started to turn, and the autumn air would be fresh and cool. Pretty soon the folks would begin to think about Thanksgiving. Did they miss him? he wondered. His mother naturally would have—at first. Well, they had wanted him to show the stuff he was made of. They ought to be satisfied. And it had accomplished his immediate object, to forget. At any rate the mere physical pain had somewhat deadened his anguish at his loss of Nancy. Sewed in the lining of his tunic he carried his sole memento of her, the photograph now cracked and yellow but carefully wrapped in an oilskin rag.

Would he ever see her, or any of them, again? He computed the chances at about one to three. If he did escape death by typhus or dysentery or small-pox, by knife, sword or bullet, or, worst of all, capture by the Arabs, would there be anything of him left worth seeing? Would it be recognizable as a man? Or merely a bundle of diseased filth, clinging to a tortured, crippled human frame, “eyeless, nose-

less and lifeless, asking a dole at the door"—Nancy's! The staff took pains that legionnaires should not forget the playful little Arab ways of treating unfortunate stragglers or wounded that fell into their hands. On the wall of every barrack room of the Legion's casernes were nailed photographs of mutilated bodies, as a warning to those who might be so misguided as to desert or "go on pump" as they called it,—bodies drawn and quartered, or disembowelled and filled with stones while still alive, bodies buried to the necks in sand with severed eyelids, bodies— Yet, at that, a lot of them took the chance—made the "*petite promenade*," as they called it,—preferring possible torture by the Arabs to the daily torture of a legionary's life.

Un-deux! Un-deux! Yes, he would give something to drop in on the old man that very minute. They would throw him out of the bank, sure. He had a beard two inches long. He had not had a bath for six weeks, his underclothes were fouled and torn, and instead of socks he had wrapped his feet after the manner of the legionary in greased rags called "*chaussettes russes*." And yet, although he could hardly drag one foot after the other and the weight under which he staggered seemed about to crush him, although every muscle screamed with pain, and his back, shoulders and heels were raw with blisters, although his arms were numb and his heart and lungs felt compressed as if at the bottom of the sea, although in fact he was undergoing at that moment

the maximum physical distress that a marching soldier can be subjected to and live, his flagging spirit rallied and gained strength to carry on from the realization that in spite of his father's indictment he had proved himself a man. *Un-deux! Un-deux!* Wonder what the old man would say if he could see him now! Would he think him a soft, incompetent trifler, a lazy mollicoddle? Wonder—wonder—wonder——

Was that hulking figure swaying against his shoulder straps, bowed and begrimed like a coal heaver, Robert Howard Shafter, of Rome, Ohio, Etats-Unis? His fainting spirit, now quite giddy, fluttered above the plodding shape and took stock of its experiences, visioning them as in the unrolling of a cinema. *Un-deux! Un-deux!*

He saw himself, along with the other rookies or "blues" newly enlisted at Algiers, marching through the Porte de Tlemcen, across the Place Sadi Carnot, through the big gates of the depot at Sidi Bel Abbes and into the vast, bleak enclosure of the barracks. He had been assigned to a "*compagnie d'instruction*,"—"the C. I. 1"—and after being outfitted by the *Fourrier-Sergent*, had been sent to the washing shed for a bath, and having donned a new canvas fatigue uniform was marched with the other "blues" to a side gate off the barracks and compelled to dispose of his entire stock of civilian clothing for the best price he could get. He was then turned over to

the only other American in the battalion—a six-foot negro introducing himself as “Al Jolson”—to be taught the ropes. “Al” was a soft-shoe dancer and vaudeville comedian who, having been born in New Orleans, spoke passable French, was good-natured, reasonably honest, and proud of his protégé and compatriot.

“Say ‘How do’ to Mistah Dooley, boys. He’s sure some chicken! He’s ma baby!”

When enlisting at the “*Bureau des Engagements Volontaires*” at Algiers, Robert, in a sudden and momentary fit of whimsicality which did not survive the evening, had stated that his name was “Mr. Dooley,” that he was by profession a “Ukelele player” and that he came from Rome—all of which had been solemnly inscribed in the records and forwarded to Sidi Bel Abbes. As “Mistah Dooley” he was thereafter known to both legionaries and Arabs. It would have been impossible for him to have changed his name, age, or nationality, which had thus been fixed forever. He could only alter his profession, although that given in enlisting always remained the official one. And his fate was foreordained for five years! That fate, bad as it had proved to be, was as nothing to what it might have been had it not been for his protector “Al” and the fact that at Sidi Bel Abbes he had received two hundred and fifty francs as the first half of his *prime d’engagement* or enlistment fee. While it lasted he was as popular as a college freshman being “rushed” for a fraternity.

The breaking-in process had been frightful, for he had enlisted in mid June and the parade ground was like a caldron. The Médecin-Major, who had otherwise given him a clean bill of health, had poked him in the ribs good-naturedly. "Too fat," he growled, "but you'll soon be cured of that."

The reduction had begun instanter. Reveille at five and two hours drill on nothing but half a pint of coffee, called "jus," and served in a jug from cot to cot. At eight a *casse croûte* of bread and cheese. Lunch at eleven—a pint of soup, a hunk of meat, a half pound of bread, and either rice, macaroni, dried beans, or potatoes, boiled in grease after the German style, and coffee. A couple of times a week they would have salad, jam, fried pastry and a cup of wine. Dinner the same. It was belly filling but unappetizing, swimming in grease. Robert could not get used to seeing his German comrades buy a pound of lard and lick it out of the saucepan in which they had melted it.

The daily drill had been at first an almost unendurable torture,—the weight of his rifle galling his shoulder muscles, fierce agony after the first twenty minutes. But the bi-weekly marches were even worse. These were glorified endurance contests in which the men were gradually given more and more to carry until they could cover thirty kilometers in full accoutrement. Robert quickly lost his fat. Now he could do his thirty kilometers—even his fifty.

He had read, like all boys, many highly colored accounts of life in *La Légion Etrangère*, but in the down-at-the-heels crew of "tough guys," criminals and degenerates composing the "rookies" he recognized nothing that remotely resembled either an English nobleman seeking to hide his identity or a millionaire adventurer in search of disillusionment. They may have been there, but the majority looked just a hard-boiled bunch who had disqualified themselves for anything else. A considerable number had joined merely to get the five hundred francs' *prime d'engagement* with the intention of deserting at the first good opportunity—an opportunity which for most of them never came. They were of every known race, such as had had beliefs or creeds having forgotten them with the pasts which they had obliterated on joining the Legion,—swarthy Turks and Bulgars, hollow-cheeked Russians, Poles, Serbs, Swiss, Belgians, Italians, Spaniards, Moors, blond Danes and Germans, Scandinavian square heads, English ticket-of-leave men, Cossacks from the Don and Kouban, stragglers from Denikin's and Wrangel's armies, for most of whom life no longer held any hope whatever and when their five-year term was up would re-enlist once more, twice more, perhaps, until the desert claimed them for its own.

Yet these men without a country, and whose very names hid an identity which they sought to forget, acquired a heritage of glory of which nothing could deprive them. It was the side of Legion life

to which Robert never ceased to thrill,—that of martial grandeur, self-sacrifice and gruelling hardship endured without a grumble. He had felt that thrill on his first day at Sidi Bel Abbès when his corporal had shown him the picture of the “Camarone” hanging on the wall of the lounging room. It depicted three wounded legionaries firing from a shattered outbuilding at a storming party of Mexicans.

“*Regardez!*” said the corporal reverently. “There are the father-heroes of the *Légion Etrangère*. On April 30, 1863, the Third Company, consisting of sixty-two legionaries, were attacked on the march by an overwhelming number of Mexicans and took refuge in a hacienda, known as the Camarone farm. Here they held the enemy at bay for over ten hours, killing three hundred of them. The heat was terrific and they had no water. Finally all were killed but three, a corporal and two men, one of whom was wounded. When their ammunition was exhausted, and they could find no more in the pouches of their dead comrades, instead of surrendering they abandoned their shelter and charged the whole Mexican army with their bayonets. One was shot, but the enemy commander, out of admiration for such bravery, ordered his men to cease firing and disarmed the other two. Now wherever the Legion finds itself, the anniversary of that day is always celebrated and the names of the officers and men who fell there recalled before the assembled units.”

Above the picture were the words "*Honneur et Fidélité*"—below, "*Valeur et Discipline*."

The corporal saluted the picture. Robert did likewise.

"*Voici des vrais légionnaires!*" said his guide. "*C'est la Légion Etrangère!*"

"*Vive la Légion!*" exclaimed Robert.

The corporal patted his shoulder. "*C'est bien!*" he said. "Never forget the Camarone!"

It was this which partially reconciled him to what he had experienced later when the regiment had been sent down by train through Ain Sefra and Figuig to Colomb-Bechar on the edge of the Grand Erg. It was in an oasis, a semi-desert post, the tail of the railroad and head of the caravan lines to Senegal and the Hogar, surrounded by an ochre-colored waste of sand and rock. There was nothing for the legionaries to do there except to get drunk and this they did enthusiastically on each pay day. For the rest they spent their spare time lying on their cots, loafing around the canteen or watching the caravans of camels stalk through the streets to the square.

He was now a full fledged legionary and over his bunk was tacked a card reading:

MISTAH DOOLEY No. 27,841 LÉGIONNAIRE 2 ^{ème} CLASSE

At the time of his enlistment Sidi Bel Abbes had seemed to him as uninteresting a place as he had

ever seen, a bare, whitewashed, blistered barrack town of sloppy wine shops and *tabacs*, of tawdry post cards and talking machines, with flat, sparsely windowed houses and narrow streets of dismal *pave* through which the lightest wind lifted clouds of yellow dust. Now as compared to Colomb-Bechar he looked back upon it as a sort of earthly paradise.

But when they were marched to the tiny frontier post of Bou Kemkem, Robert learned the seamy side of legion life. The garrison sleeping quarters consisted of a long room on one side of the *caserne*—a square, bare, open space surrounded by a high wall topped with broken glass. It had but a single window in each end, and, since both were hermetically sealed and the low roof was of corrugated iron, the atmosphere of the interior by day was ovenlike. Beneath this grill stood thirty-five so-called beds each made of three boards resting on iron horses. It was impossible to fumigate the barracks so that it was still inhabited by the direct descendants of the original hardy settlers who had followed the injunction common to both the Bible and the Koran to multiply fruitfully.

The men lived like pigs, dispensing with forks and spoons and eating with their fingers. The blankets in which they slept had not been washed since issued thirty years before and were alive with vermin which swarmed everywhere. As Pepin said, "A man would be selfish to want his whole head to himself." Drunkenness and homosexuality were common and considered unimportant by the officers so long as they

did not disturb the service. Theft—as among the Spartans—was regarded as a virtue, the legionary being known throughout the colonies for his ability to *se débrouiller* and to make way with anything from a jackknife to a mule, which, if necessary, he would disguise by repainting it and adding a false tail, while his ordinary conversational obscenity would bring a blush to the cheek of a Montmartre taxi-driver. It was literally a life of “poverty, hunger and dirt.” No candles and little soap were issued, the legionary being forced to buy such things, as well as his tobacco, out of his pay of twenty-five centimes per day in Algeria—or seventy-five centimes in Morocco, lavishly increased to two francs five after the first two years of service.

They roasted by day and froze by night. They quarrelled, fought, went *maboul*, attempted desertion, were sentenced to prison with solitary confinement—the “*soixante dont quinze*” and “*quinze dont huit*,” as they called it, the penalty being announced to them in that fashion,—or if particularly recalcitrant were shifted off to the “*Compagnie de Discipline*” at Casablanca. Their only solace was to swig a litre of the thick, sour Algerian wine at the canteen, toss naked on their red-hot cots or indulge in the bestialities of the *village nègre*! It was then that Robert realized the truth of the words he had so often sung:

“If the home we never write to, and the oaths we never
keep,
And all we know most distant and most dear,

*'Across the snoring barrack-room return to break our
sleep,*

Can you blame us if we soak ourselves in beer?

*When the drunken comrade mutters and the great guard-
lantern gutters*

And the horror of our fall is written plain,

*Every secret, self-revealing on the aching whitewashed
ceiling,*

Do you wonder that we drug ourselves from pain?"

It was a life of filth and degradation to which the majority of the men succumbed almost at once, living only for the semi-monthly debauch that followed every pay day. Most of them became utterly broken and useless for any life but that offered by the legion, lucky if they were killed before their limit of service was up and, when thrown out with a beggarly pension, were glad to come back under another name. A few English and Americans stood up under it and made good. The only thing that kept Robert from going under was his love for his parents and his memory of Nancy. During that time he had become a man.

Un-deux! Un-deux! Could he stand it? They had already marched fifty kilometres since morning, with only the regular hourly "pauses" of ten minutes each! Were they going to do the whole seventy clear back to Bou Kemkem? What were the orders? *Un-deux! Un-deux!* There was no more singing. No sound, but the irregular plod of their leaden feet, and the gasping intake of exhaustion.

Just ahead of him "Al Jolson," bent nearly double, was swaying from side to side. Why was it that the negroes—the men of the Sudan and the "Sous"—suffered so much more from the heat than the whites? They always collapsed first. A white could outmarch a black any day! "Al" was moaning—clearly all in. "Gawdy!" he kept saying. "Oh, Gawdy! Gawdy!" Twice he almost fell forward but managed to retrieve himself. Robert himself no longer felt anything, except a terrible pain in the top of his head. Was he going *maboul* at last? *Un-deux! Un-deux!* The column had become a blur. Waves of icy cold and burning heat flowed over his forehead. The shutter behind his eyeballs opened and closed—black—white—*un-deux*—black—white—yes, he was going *maboul*. . . .

A rifle shot twenty paces behind brought him trembling to consciousness. Arabs? The men wheeled, bringing their rifles to ready. There was nothing to be seen. The last platoon were bending over something which writhed for a moment across the *piste* and then lay still. The corporal ran over, looked, and hurried up the line. The whistle blew.

"*Compagnie, halte!*"

The lieutenant came trotting back, followed by the corporal, and dismounted.

"Tongeroff has killed himself," said one of the rear platoon. "He was just in front of me. All of a sudden I saw him bend forward. Then he threw himself on his bayonet and pulled the trigger."

A hand of ice clasped itself upon Robert's head and forced him gently to the sand. The sky turned black. Thank God, that night—and sleep—had come at last! From somewhere near at hand he heard a guttural voice:

"Gardez-vous! Burial squad fall out! En avant! Marche!"

III

It was pay day, September the first, and once more back in Colomb-Bechar the battalion had as usual gone on the loose. For a month there had been a rumor that they were to be ordered to Morocco to re-enforce the "Column of the Uppér Ouergha" which was operating in the zone of the Haut Leben and the Oued Amzez, as a barrier to Abd-El-Krim's threatened descent upon Fez. It had been hailed with joy, for inaction is the worst punishment outside the Penal Battalion that can be inflicted upon a legionary. But nothing definite could be learned and the monotony had got on their nerves worse than ever.

The *village nègre* was an official institution and the women were inspected twice a week by the doctor or officer in command. The men were encouraged to go there, but when they had the money preferred to frequent the more expensive cafés where the dancing women were. Some of these were pretty, especially the Berber girls, who were practically white. They wore thick baggy skirts down to the ground and masses of brass jewelry on their heads, arms and ankles, but they were generally regarded as "logy" and expensive. In opposition to the Arabs was the up-to-date saloon run by a half-caste named Mahommed Nagri, who had imported a mechanical piano and some "girls" widely advertised as being

"just from Paris." None of the legionaries, however, were deceived by this in the slightest degree. They were perfectly well aware that the so-called "girls" were cast-offs from Mogador, Agadir, or at the very best Casablanca. All the same it gave a sort of style to Nagri's, where the "girls" all wore short skirts and spoke a bastard French. A haggard half-dozen they were of middle-aged, paint-smeared drabs, the hybrid offspring of the miscegenation of Turkey, Tunis, Algeria, and Spain. In spite of the gibes of his fellow legionaries Robert had given them and all like them a wide berth.

But on this evening Robert, fed up with boredom, had capitulated to Pepin's urging that he come over to Nagri's and bring his ukelele. From the square rose the thud of tom-toms, the throb of darabukkehs, the jangle of tambourines, and the nasal whine of the native flute, interrupted by the occasional protesting roar of a camel.

Through the open door of "Papa" Nagri's a drugget of yellow light poured out upon the *pavé*, and with it an odor of spilled wine and sour sawdust. There was a big hubbub in there. The mechanical piano was going full tilt and the half-drunk legionaries were dancing madly, *képis* over one ear, tunics unbuttoned, cigarettes dangling from the corners of their mouths,—folk dances, prehistoric polkas, mazurkas, jigs, national dances, anything that came into their heads without regard to the music.

Groups about the tables argued ferociously, shout-

ing obscenities at the dancers and at one another, boasted amorous adventures, told funny stories, or blubbered drunkenly over their wine. It was their day, they owned the town and they knew it. All the other troops had been kept in barracks to avoid trouble, and the guards on post and military patrols throughout the town were all composed of legionaries, who will always go quietly with a provost-marshal and squad of their own comrades, while if arrested by men of another unit will inevitably try to start something. It was bedlam, riot rather than revelry. The enthusiasm of "Mistah Dooley" and "Pepin le Grand" for wine, women and song was mitigated by the obvious lack of accommodations and the imminent danger of smashing the ukelele.

"Mademoiselle Bibi," an elderly "Parisienne" from Port Saïd, broke away from her partner and dragged them inside the door. "*Entrez, mes enfants!*" she crooned. "Ali"—to the Arab waiter—"bring these gentlemen a bottle of wine!"

She seated herself on the table, crossing her fat red-stockinged legs in front of her, and slid her arm around Robert's neck, while her partner, Sorel, a sallow-faced legionary, a bank defaulter from Lyons, stood scowling a few feet away, uncertain whether military etiquette demanded that he should seize her by the throat and strangle her, or punch her on the nose.

Robert grinned politely at him. "Come on, Sorel! Give us a song."

The man stared at him, then approached unsteadily.

"*Allons!*" urged Robert. Bibi ordered them to stop the piano, calling out, "Sorel is going to sing—you can help out in the chorus."

Sorel, thus projected into the limelight, lost his grouch. He had a rich bass and liked to exhibit it.

"With Monsieur Nagri's compliments," murmured Ali, placing a carafe of native claret beside them. Volunteer musicians were worth encouraging.

The legionary tossed off a glass of it, drew his sleeve across his mouth, and, striking an attitude, began to sing:

*"Des marches d'Afrique
J'en ai plein le dos,
On y va trop vite.
On n'y boit que de l'eau.
Des lauriers, des victoires,
De ce songe illusoire
Que l'on nomme 'la gloire,'
J'en ai plein le dos——"*

He was gazing into the smoke which hung in an opaque cloud under the rafters. Bibi ran her fingers through Robert's hair, purring, and rubbed her cheek against his. He thrust her off. The accompaniment waned and the song died. Sorel turned.

"Come away from him!" he shouted threateningly.

For answer the woman bent and made as if to

give Robert a further caress. Sorel sprang forward, but at the same instant Bibi, with a cry of triumph, whipped Nancy's picture from beneath Robert's tunic and brandished it in the air.

"*Regardez!*" she cackled. "He carries a charm! To keep him safe from the bullets of Arabs and the glances of women!"

Robert snatched it too late. Sorel had already seized it.

"Give it back to me, Sorel!" he ordered, his face bloodless. The legionary stuck his tongue in his cheek and winked at the circle about him. Deliberately he tore off the oilskin wrapper and studied the face beneath.

"Oo, la-la!" he simpered. "*Bon sang de Dieu!*"

"Let's see it!" cried others, crowding forward.

Robert hurled himself upon the Lyonnaise. They grappled, swayed and crashed down among the tables, fighting wildly for possession of the photograph. Little Pepin attempting to go to his friend's assistance was knocked senseless. Others joined in the mêlée. The saloon became a mob of frenzied legionaries, thirsty for bloodshed, who pounded each other without regard to identity,—gouging, kicking, clubbing. None of them had the remotest idea of what it was all about, or cared. Robert protected himself as best he could from the blows that fell upon his head and the feet that trampled him. Crawling behind a corner of the bar he raised himself in time to see "Al Jolson" towering in the doorway.

"Where ma boy?" he demanded. "What you doin' to ma boy?"

Receiving no reply, he dove into the writhing mass of legionaries and began hurling them apart. The lights went out. There was a trample of feet outside.

"Patrol! *Prenez garde!*"

A lantern flashed from the doorway and the legionaries scrambled silently to their feet in the darkness.

"*Gardez-vous!*"

"Papa" Nagri turned the lights on again, disclosing the sergeant-major accompanied by a squad of military police.

"What's all this?" he roared.

For a moment no one dared reply. They stood there bleeding, their clothes half torn from their bodies, abashed, like schoolboys. Then little Pepin thrust his head over the bar. Saluting, he said:

"*Pardon, Monsieur le Général!* We are only having a little singing practice. Some one unfortunately extinguished the lights, thus causing a moment of slight confusion. Is it not so?" he inquired agreeably.

"*C'est vrai! Absolument! Parole d'honneur!*" came in reassuring chorus.

The sergeant-major looked at them through his bushy eyebrows.

"You can sing in hell!" he grunted. "*Gardez-vous! En avant! Marche!*" Grudgingly they filed out. It had been a *bonne bataille!* "Al Jolson" and "Mistah

Dooley," with Pepin le Grand between them, brought up the rear.

The ukelele had been smashed to atoms, but Nancy's photograph was safely in Robert's pocket. It was torn across the bottom, but otherwise unharmed save for a smear of blood.

IV

*"He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure sun he stands.
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunder-bolt he falls."*

A little earlier on that same evening, and no farther distant as the crow flies than three hundred miles away in the territory of the Aït* Tseghouchene, the dogs outside a certain *kasbah* had set up a terrific barking which was presently followed by the announcement that a horseman was coming up the valley.

A *kasbah* is a sort of "moated grange" or fortified farmhouse made of mud, occupied by the principal man of the locality and housing not only the latter's family and personal followers, but a vague number of nondescripts who dwell more or less sketchily just within or outside its walls. *Kasbah* is a general term for anything from the feudal castle of a great chief-tain such as El Glaui to a straggling collection of mud hovels like a New Mexican pueblo which it frequently resembles. Thus it may mean either "mansion," "fort" or "village," but the word always implies protection and, since in that land all strangers

*Tribe, people; literally, "children."

until otherwise identified are enemies, the owner of the particular *kasbah* referred to, the Berber Cheikh Saïd ou Mohand, who was also the *omaru* or military head of the district, reached for his rifle and followed by his attendants went out to meet him.

"Salaam aleikoum! May the blessing of Allah be upon thee and thine house!" called out the stranger hastily.

Saïd ou Mohand recognized him as one Mahommed El Gahzi, a cheikh of the Aït Aïssa.

"*Aleikoum salaam!*" he answered. "And upon thee, peace!" thereupon leading the way into the *kasbah*, for custom said that not until his guest had swallowed with loud gurgles of satisfaction at least three glasses of mint tea, might Saïd ou Mohand inquire his business.

"I am come with a message from my lord Sidi Raho who seeks thine aid and that of thy tribe to drive the *Roumis** from our land," said Mahommed El Gahzi.

Saïd ou Mohand stroked his beard.

"He has sent such messages before, Mahommed El Gahzi, and I have not gone. What new thing has Sidi Raho done that he needs my help?"

"Hast heard of Abd-El-Krim?"

Saïd ou Mohand shook his head.

"Know then that a new Sultan has arisen in the Riff, and is hurling the Spaniards before him head-long into the sea. He has put a whole army of two

* Foreigners: literally "Romans."

hundred thousand men to the sword. My lord Sidi Raho fights as his ally against the *Roumis*. The tribes are rising. Abd-El-Krim will scourge the infidels from the land and make himself Sultan of the Moghreb.* Then he will cross the Straits of Gibraltar and reconquer Spain, a land once belonging to the Moors. Those that join him now will be the first to profit by his favor. They will be pashas, grand viziers,—caïds at the very least. When the roll is called, thy name, O Saïd ou Mohand, should lead all the rest! Saïd ou Mohand *Pasha*—hath it not a pleasant sound?" asked Mahommed El Gahzi.

The eyes of Saïd ou Mohand gleamed.

"Tell me more, O Mahommed el Gahzi. Thy speaking interests me," he said.

Saïd ou Mohand dwelt in the foothills of the Middle Atlas, less than a hundred miles south of the city of Fez—that coveted jewel of the Moghreb. He had never heard of the Honorable Hiram W. Shafter nor indeed of the United States of America of which the latter was, in his own estimation at least, so distinguished a citizen. He had never heard of Rome, Ohio, nor of Rome, anywhere else, but this worried him no more than did his entire ignorance of the existence of England, Italy or Germany. Saïd ou Mohand had no conception of the ocean. He assumed that the earth was flat and would have regarded any other hypothesis as unworthy of adult consideration.

* Morocco; literally "land of the setting sun."

He conceived it as composed of vast deserts of sand, a few mountain ranges and some rivers, and as inhabited by divers tribes of men who differed little save that some were better fighters than others. But in spite of Saïd ou Mohand's lack of knowledge of geography and history he was the grand old man of the Aït Tseghouchene and, until the coming of the French, his word had been unbroken law over a territory at least ten times as large as the county of which Mr. Shafter was the Republican boss.

Many centuries before Mr. Shafter's birth in Rome, Ohio, and during the reign of the Sultan Moulay Ismael, there had wandered up from the Grand Erg or the Bin-el-Korbin far to the south, a stalwart, blue-eyed nomad with a blue cross tattooed upon his forehead, accompanied by one wife, eight children, two camels, eleven donkeys and a flock of sheep, and had encamped in his black goat's-hair tents on the northerly foothills of the Atlas. It was a desolate country of ominous ravines and precipices, surrounded by mountain peaks six thousand or more feet in height. In winter it was blanketed with snow, but in summer the valleys were clad in green and ran with water and the upland blossomed into a red and yellow sea of wild flowers—a heaven to parched wanderers from the desert. So they had remained and built their *kasbah*, of dried mud and stones, and defended their lands against such as would have deprived them of it, and had multiplied until now the Tseghouchene numbered eighteen hundred fighting men.

Saïd ou Mohand acknowledged no master, not even the Sultan of Morocco. He held his lands by the divine right of the sword and was the fountain head of all justice for fifty miles square. Time and again Sultan Moulay Abdul Aziz, and afterward Sultan Moulay Yussef, had demanded his submission and on each occasion Saïd ou Mohand had more or less impolitely told him to go about his business. Sultans were, so to speak, nothing in his life. So far as the Tseghouchene were concerned he was the sole lord of the territory thereabout. Even when Moulay Yussef's emissaries warned him that, if he continued his defiance, the fate of the rebel Bou Hamara would certainly be his, he merely laughed. Bou Hamara had been a *roghi*, or pretender, who had sought to stage a revolt against Sultan Moulay Hafid, but he had been captured, and Moulay Hafid had put him in a cage so small that he could neither stand up nor lie down and had paraded him through the streets of Fez and finally, it was alleged, thrown him to the lions. That had been in 1909, and, anyhow, Saïd ou Mohand knew very well that to-day the French would neither throw a Berber chieftain to the lions nor allow the Sultan to do so.

Just what the French were doing in Mbrocco he did not understand. Primarily he regarded them as a people of a different religion from his own. This did not interest him particularly since, although technically a follower of Islam, he was at heart a pagan. Religion with Saïd ou Mohand savored rather of

politics than of emotion. He was a Mohammedan because that was the dominant creed,—for, in fact, much the same reason that Mr. Hiram Shafter was a Republican. He believed implicitly that the chief end of man was war, and war was for but one purpose, to pillage; and to the victors naturally belonged the spoils. For this reason he distrusted and hated “the strangers with the hats,” as the Berbers called the French. Later on, when he discovered that the latter had no such intention, he modified his opinion, although he had, at the same time, a slight contempt for them on that account.

He was a thickset, black-eyed, gray-bearded man of sixty-two years who could still carry a rifle thirty miles a day. Unlike many Berbers, his rather handsome features were more brown than white, denoting a mixed strain of Lybian, Arab and probably Vandal blood. He wore a white cotton shirt, over that a red caftan, another thinner shirt outside the caftan, a heavy belt and, over all, a white burnoose. If the weather was exceptionally cold he put on another burnoose, sometimes of brown with white stripes. Upon his feet he wore yellow pointed slippers and his head was wound about with a turban of white cloth with nothing in the middle. The cross between his eyes his mother had put there, she told him, for good luck, and each of his wives had three of such marks upon their foreheads and one upon their chins.

He was very rich although he had little money, for he owned twenty-three hundred sheep, nineteen hun-

dred goats, four hundred cows, and over five hundred donkeys. He could neither read nor write, for Berbers have no written language, and when he wanted to send a letter, which was never oftener than once in two years, he had to send for a "writer" from Midelt or Outat who, being told the requirements, fulfilled them according to his own ideas. The last occasion on which he had employed a "writer" was when he had been about to marry ten-year-old Aisha, his fourth wife, from the Aït Salah.

Nine months of every year Saïd ou Mohand spent in seminomadic fashion, wandering from place to place with his flocks and herds and living with his wives and children in his black goat's-hair tents wherever grass and water could be found. Sometimes he was forced to descend to the real *bled*, or prairie, and trespass on the lands of other cheikhs who dwelt nearer Fez. But when winter came he retired to his *kasbah*, which held the pass to Fez between Boulmane and Engil on the trail of the caravans from the south. Here Saïd ou Mohand stopped them and forced them to pay toll or tribute for his "protection," either in money, silks, rugs, arms, food, asses, or sometimes a slave or two, depending upon which way they were going. If they were disinclined to pay there was a fight and Saïd ou Mohand took what he wanted. Most of the caravans were of Arabs, lean, hawk-faced men in ragged burnouses, with shaven heads save possibly for a single lock, but mingled with them were dignified, stately negroes from the

Sudan, coal-black Senegalese, and "blue" veiled men of the Tuaregs in the Hoggar, who had heard of the wonders of Fez and Meknez and who had travelled six weeks afoot or on donkeys to see them and would afterward go home and tell of the marvels which they had beheld in the *souks* and of their less agreeable experiences with Saïd ou Mohand.

Saïd ou Mohand, who, although not devout, followed the Moslem law in regard to marriage, had four wives as allowed by the Koran. His first wife, Fatma, he had married when he was fifteen and she but twelve. About every ten years or so, as the freshness of the last faded, he took another. Fatma was now an elderly hag who acted as a sort of head servant or housekeeper. Radija and Yasmina, the second and third, were still in full vigor, but getting on. Aisha, the latest, was sixteen. Their master had a poor opinion of all of them, and having no other legal slaves treated them as such, with the possible exception of Aisha. Nevertheless there were other women about the *kasbah* whose position was less well defined: Zora, the wife of a Sudanese whom Saïd ou Mohand had killed in a caravan attack; Arfa, a woman of the Glaoua whom he had bought in Meknez, and Saida, a runaway lady from a neighboring tribe to whom he extended his fatherly protection. All these lived together in ignorance and amity and all adored Saïd ou Mohand. As none of his wives had ever been taught anything, and as Saïd ou Mohand had no books or magazines, conversation in the

family circle was fairly limited and confined strictly to domestic matters.

Like the Gaul of Cæsar, his existence was divided into three parts,—military, connubial and gastro-nomic. He believed in Allah, but his faith in the Koran was really not so great as his belief in the magic spells and incantations of Omar Abd El Azni, his family doctor, whose pharmacopœia consisted of dried chicken wings, old sardine cans, powdered lizard, rabbit skins, skulls of birds and small animals, foxes' tails, bundles of feathers and old bottles.

Omar Abd El Azni was a most learned man, and he knew exactly what charm to use to meet every possible human exigency together with the names, personal peculiarities, and religious affiliations of all the various local jinns and whether they were Moslem, Jew or Christian.

Jinns live on the stairs or in out-of-the-way nooks and corners of the house, and are particularly fond of water and the blood of newly killed animals. For this reason it is very dangerous for a child to go to the well at night or to approach blood spilled on the floor, for if in so doing he should brush against a jinn the latter might put a curse upon him. If this happens a first-class, up-to-date doctor should be able to tell just which jinn has been offended and suggest the proper course to placate him.

Each jinn has a favorite color,—Zerrigu likes violet, while Quahoui prefers coffee-color,—and anger can often be appeased by wearing a burnoose of the

right shade. Sometimes, particularly if the jinn be a Jew or a Christian, nothing will avail. Occasionally the jinns will make themselves visible in the most horrid shapes,—cats with enormous whiskers or toads with huge stomachs. But in any case they are always close by and their feelings must be considered. When a Berber builds a new house his wife puts a pan of milk in each corner of the room for the jinn and says "O jinn, master of this place, I am the guest of God and of you. Accept me in your midst." Omar Abd El Azni could always—that is, almost always—tell whether it was better to wear a red or blue burnoose or hang around the neck the tail of a fox killed on the eighth night of Ramadan.

Saïd ou Mohand may have been lukewarm as to Gabriel, Michael, Azrael, Israfel, and Eblis but he believed implicitly in red and blue jinns; if any be inclined to scoff at him, be it remembered that even Mr. Shafter visualized Satan as clad in red and often referred to "blue devils." Saïd ou Mohand thought that a fox's tail could cure rheumatism; Mr. Shafter carried a rabbit's foot, refused to start a journey on a Friday, and when playing poker would often change his seat on the theory that he would thereby change his luck also.

The jinns, on close inspection, would have been found to resemble strikingly the nymphs and dryads of Roman mythology. Saïd ou Mohand knew nothing of the hierarchy of gods and goddesses, and he had never even so much as heard of the Roman Em-

pire, but he had been told as a child of a strange race of men called *Roumis*—men in brass caftans and gold and silver hats with plumes—who a long, long time ago had swept over the Moghreb from the east; and he had seen the remains of a city they had built called Volubilis with great columns of stone and a huge arch of triumph erected in honor of some one named "Caracalla." He and his people had first called the French "*Roumis*," later "the strangers with the guns," and finally "the strangers with the hats."

And of course he knew nothing of the fact that under Constantine the Great in the fourth century, the pagan Roman world had turned Christian and that Christianity had thus been introduced into North Africa among his Berber ancestors. He did not know that the Vandals from the north had in turn overwhelmed the Romans, or that the Moors had later driven out the Vandals. He only knew that when one called a stranger a *Roumi*, one meant that he was a Christian; and he sought no historic explanation of why he, a Mohammedan, preferred Christians to Arabs, deeming it merely a question of personal taste.

He took a distinct satisfaction in robbing the Arabs, thus showing that his being a follower of Islam was a purely intellectual matter, for which they were in no way responsible. Neither did he connect the cross on his forehead, or that on his sword hilt, or the cross that the veiled "blue" men—the Tuaregs from the Hoggar—had carved on their saddle pom-

mels, in any way with religion. He hated the *Roumis* because they were invaders of his land, not because they were Christians. Saïd ou Mohand took a tolerant view of things, probably holding—although not expressing—the theory that “all sensible men believe the same thing.” In this respect he differed from the majority of the Mohammedans now dwelling in Africa under French rule and whose literal belief in the Koran as the final compendium of all moral law as well as of all scientific knowledge is the great stumbling-block to progress in North Africa.

In a word, Saïd ou Mohand was a shrewd, hard-hitting, simple-minded old gentleman; a pragmatist who took the world as he found it and did not worry about things beyond his comprehension. He accepted flying machines and motors as objects which he did not understand, but which had, nevertheless, no doubt always existed in spite of the fact that he was unfamiliar with them. Outside his mental horizon one fact was no more surprising than another. But the first time he saw a horse dragging a wheeled carriage he was completely bewildered, for he knew about horses and he knew that wood came from the trees. Could it be that the same kind of wood, the same kind of horse, was used in this marvellous contrivance? He touched it gingerly with his finger to reassure himself! Yet it is recorded that Mr. Hiram Shafter when informed by Mrs. Shafter that a photograph had been sent from England to America by radio merely tilted his cigar, muttered “Well, why

not?" and went on reading his newspaper, whereas he had been astounded and fascinated by a machine that turned out paper collars.

For half a century Saïd ou Mohand had been fighting the tribes adjacent to his territory. Sultans and pretenders might come and go at Fez, Meknez, Rabat, but he disdainfully refused to acknowledge the right of any of them to interfere with his affairs. Up in the mountains of the Tache de Taza to the northeast his friend "Saint" Sidi Raho had been fighting the French ever since May, 1912. Sidi Raho had been one of the Berber cheikhs who had descended upon the city and got inside the Bab Guissa during the Berber attack on Fez, when General Lyautey had first been sent to restore order after the treaty recognizing the French protectorate had been signed there. For twelve years the French had been driving him back, back, and he had been slowly retreating. But in those narrow ravines a hundred men with Mausers might well defy an army. It was true that Sidi Raho had several times sent messengers to the Tseghouchene urging Saïd ou Mohand to join him in his *djihad* against the "strangers with the hats," but the latter had not done so. Yet what Mahommed El Gahzi now told him put a new aspect on the situation. He hesitated.

"First," continued the emissary, "we must capture Fez. While Abd-El-Krim sweeps down upon it from the north, my lord, Sidi Raho, will attack it from the east. The *Roumis* have no garrison there worthy of

the name. And thou, O Saïd ou Mohand, must be there! We must attack at once before troops can be sent to defend it. It will fall. We shall loot the city,—Fez, the walled treasure-house of tinkling fountains, of inlaid armor, of perfumes, rich silks and embroideries stiff with gold and silver! There will be jewels, ivory pistols, dancing women! Wilt thou join us?"

The mouth of Saïd ou Mohand watered. His gaunt fingers caressed his scraggly beard. Instinctively he reached for his rifle. "*Mektoub rebib*," he said solemnly. "It is written! *Inshallah*! As God wills!"

V

"To the legion of the lost ones, to the cohort of the damned."

THE *rassemblement général* sounded from the western gate of the *caserne*, and Robert with the other men who had been playing football started toward the barracks cheering as they ran. They knew that their orders for Morocco had come and that in ten hours they must be moving. Already they had received their instructions, together with a record of the armament assigned to each man. The Médecin-Major had examined them all, deciding who were fit and who were unfit for the arduous service contemplated. Now pay had to be given out, cartridges and reserve food distributed, kits newly packed.

This last was something of a job, for no matter when inspected, by day or night, everything must be found in its exact place, folded in its particular way. At length it was accomplished and Robert lugged his sack out into the courtyard and, with his rifle, put it in the place assigned. Before "taps" everything was ready, and the next morning, immediately after sunrise, the battalion entrained for Oudja, the first frontier town of Morocco, beyond which the local broad-gauge railroad did not run.

Their route took them back from Colomb-Bechar and the semi-desert to Sidi Bel Abbès, and thence west to Tlemcen. For two days they passed through a richly fertile country; but when they reached Oudja he realized with disappointment that Morocco—at least that part of it to which they were going—was wholly different from Algeria. The orchards and vineyards ceased abruptly and, in their place, miles of barren, yellow *bled* stretched away to where in the north a snow-capped mountain wall towered toward the sky—the Riff.

Here Robert was amazed at the extent and character of the military preparations being made. The sidings were jammed with supply trains, motor lorries filled with Moroccan regulars rumbled along under clouds of dust, while the air was filled with the “poppety-pop-pop” of the motorbicycle despatch bearers. For General Lyautey had reluctantly reached the conclusion that the Riffians must be taught a lesson.

Abd-El-Krim, a chieftain of one of the tribes forever at war with one another in the Spanish Zone running along the Mediterranean Coast from the Straits of Gibraltar to beyond Melilla, had been emboldened by his success in guerilla warfare against the Spanish outposts—as well as, perhaps, by indirect encouragement, both of a moral and financial nature, from outside sources—to declare himself “Sultan of the Moghreb.” Gradually his forces had become augmented until he had been able to surround some

Spanish detachments and take their guns. In 1923 he actually had captured a whole Spanish army of not less than 20,000 men, exacting enormous ransom for the prisoners and furnishing himself without cost with a complete equipment for modern warfare, cannon and machine guns, ammunition, food supplies, field-telephone and telegraph.

His success was his undoing. The mountain tribes of North Africa have never been subdued. Perhaps they never will be. France holds in tutelage more than twenty million Mohammedans, who are closely united to the other three hundred million adherents of the Prophet. The Koran teaches "submission to superior force for the time being." But they are merely waiting for the moment to rise and overwhelm their masters. From every side the tribesmen flocked to Krim's standard; his fame spread across all Africa to Egypt and the Sudan. Caravans meeting in mid-Sahara transmitted the tidings to Timbuktu, Lake Chad, and the steaming swamps of the Sudan. Abd-El-Krim had started a "dijihad,"—a "Holy War." Behind his mountain veil, to Europeans and Africans alike he loomed a mysterious and colossal menace.

The Arab takes no note of nationality. His politics is religion. His allegiance is feudal. He gives his fealty to that chieftain of his acquaintance most powerful or likely to become so. He is no more steadfast than the desert sand beneath his feet. His loyalty vacillates with the fortunes of war. Hence the swiftness

of a desert uprising and the possibility of an apparent miracle like that of Lawrence in Arabia. Nowhere than in the desert is it more true that nothing succeeds like success. A single victory may determine a campaign.

Soon Abd-El-Krim, who probably at the beginning had no greater ambition than to remain uncrowned "King of the Riff," found himself with a full-fledged Arab insurrection on his hands, heralded as the new Islamic leader who should weld all the followers of the Prophet into a single burning lance and drive the infidels—Spanish, French, and Italian alike—into the sea. He had never been able to exact obedience from the Beni Bou Yahi or the Metalsa, and he was now no more able to control the wild tribes hurrying to the Riff than he could the wild hawks wheeling above his peaks. He had invoked Eblis and Eblis had come! The imp was out of the bottle and would not go back. They stormed down the slopes of the Atlas, sweeping past the French outposts, burning villages, kidnapping the women, driving off the cattle, and were away again almost before the alarm could be sounded.

The *indigènes* on the French side of the boundary ascribed the failure to follow or to send punitive expeditions in pursuit of these raiders to timidity and weakness. They could not understand that an international treaty between Spain and France barred the way. They began to be afraid. Abd-El-Krim must indeed be an instrument in the hands of God if the

Roumis submitted thus to his chastisement! There began a regular migration from the French Protectorate to the Riff. And once in the Riff, the Arabs who had been merely looking for protection were compelled, whether they wished to do so or not, to fight against their former friends.

In the Tache de Taza to the south, politically disconnected with the Riff, which the French had only partially subdued, fighting broke out again. The flames of revolt spread, and the French, who year by year had diminished their forces in Morocco through a desire not to appear militaristic, found their outposts threatened. Soon the whole north bank of the Ouergha had been isolated. There was fear for Fez. At the moment when Robert's battalion, along with three others from Sidi Bel Abbes, was being rushed to its relief there were hardly any troops in the city.

The battalion detrained at Taza, camped on the outskirts of the town, and at four the next morning started upon the march to Fez. The heat, in spite of the high altitude, was prostrating and, after their days of railway travel, the first marches were unendurable. Dozens fell, only to be driven on, for the country was no longer safe. But there was no grumbling.

Soon they began to overtake huge convoys of food and munitions. Airplanes droned overhead. Motorcycles roared up and down forcing the columns to one side and filling the air with the stink of gasoline,

while in the fields rode hundreds of loyal natives in burnoose and turban who had been hastily armed and mounted and were being hurried to the Ouergha.

As they approached Fez the converging roads became choked with troops—legionaries, black Senegalese, *Tirailleurs*, *Sapeurs*, Spahis in long scarlet and blue cloaks. A rumor spread that Fez was besieged, had even been taken by the Riffians, but there was no sign of an enemy as the battalion marched around the ramparts of the city and pitched camp at sunset on the plain beyond Fez Eldjid, the upper town.

Next morning Robert learned, rather to his disgust, that they were not to be sent to the Riff but, with a squadron of Spahis and a battalion of Moroccan sharpshooters, were to complete a *Groupe Mobile* organized to relieve outposts besieged by the forces of Sidi Raho on the escarpments of the Middle Atlas to the south. Although already exhausted by the march from Taza, they covered forty miles that day on foot, bivouacking in the fortified town of Sefrou on the edge of the disputed territory between the loyal or Blad-Makhzen tribes, who acknowledged Sultan Mulay Yussef, and those who were still recalcitrant. It lay in a softly wooded valley, rising gradually upward to foothills against a background of forbidding peaks, on one of which, beyond the reach of his vision, Robert knew that a handful of starving legionaries were holding at bay hundreds of merciless hawk-faced men, who, hidden among the rocks,

were only waiting until thirst should compel surrender to swoop down upon the exhausted garrisons.

For five days the *Groupe Mobile* had marched into the mountains, leaving behind them first the lush meadows around Sefrou; then the upland valleys shadowed with the silver green of the olives, mingled with darker patches of figs and walnuts; and at last even the water-torn yellow slopes sparsely dotted with thorn and cactus, until they had attained a height of perhaps five thousand feet above sea level. At times they encountered ice, while melting snow made the loose earth soft and the shale slippery and treacherous. A battery of 65's, a machine-gun company and supply train made up the column, which presently found progress extremely difficult. Frequently it was necessary to rebuild the road before going on. Occasionally they passed deserted villages or *kasbahs* but saw no natives, not even old women or children. Yet they were fully aware of being under the surveillance of a thousand eyes and knew that behind every height lurked bodies of guerillas who retired only to attack in force at the most advantageous opportunity.

The outposts stood on the bastions of the first or lower range, in the heart of the disaffected area. Some of them, already abandoned, must be destroyed and others relieved. These last, in view of the suddenness of the uprising, were short of both food and men. Attempts had been made to furnish water by sending airplanes to drop blocks of ice

inside the walls, but the post areas were so small that planes flying high enough to be out of rifle range were almost as likely to drop the ice among the Berbers outside as inside among the French.

One of these posts, Tichkoukt, was in desperate straits, for the ridges overlooking and surrounding it were in the hands of the enemy who, by virtue of the machine-gun fire with which they could sweep the sides of the approach and the military skill of the *omaru*, the cheikh Saïd ou Mohand, had already compelled two relief expeditions to retreat. Grown bolder, they had now invested the blockhouse itself, and had dug a double row of trenches, one facing the fort, to cut off escape on the part of the garrison, and the other the slopes up which the would-be deliverers must climb. Its position was not only critical but tragic, for twice daily an airplane, with the regularity of an autobus, would come drumming up from Fez, circle over the post, and then, roaring back on its way to H. Q. over the heads of the *Groupe Mobile*, would drop them a note as to the condition of the defenders.

On that snow-covered turret of rock, under a rain of machine-gun bullets, blistered by the sun's rays by day, congealed by night, without food or water, they were but one hour by air from tiled fountains spilling cool water into brimming basins, one hour from the noisy rush of the half-hidden Oued Fez that plunges through the heart of the city in a series of falls and swirling pools, one hour from the

piled dates, pomegranates, oranges, barley and bread-cakes of the bazaars! They were like persons imprisoned in an upper chamber of a burning building in full view of the crowd below, who are powerless to help them.

And now the commander had flashed that, unless relieved within twenty-four hours, he would be obliged to blow up the post and the airplane from Fez had dropped orders that the column must go to his assistance at any cost!

Three ridges, one behind the other, and separated by rock-strewn ravines several hundred feet in depth, acted as ramparts to the isolated plateau upon which stood the besieged outpost, now clearly visible, a tiny white cube perched on the edge of a precipice. The column having climbed one ridge had immediately again to descend six or seven hundred yards to the bottom of the next ravine. Only by the most skilful reconnaissance, a wide deployment of flankers and an absolutely reliable rear guard could an ambush be prevented. Men and mules stumbled, fell, rolled down hill, but usually managed somehow to regain their feet.

It was obvious to Robert that to attempt to carry the Berber trenches by an open attack would be hopeless. No troops, even supported by mountain guns, could charge up those barren, flinty slopes and avoid annihilation. Yet the post must be relieved and the commander had been notified by airplane to be prepared to abandon it that night. Finally it

was decided that the only possibility of success lay in a surprise attack. An hour before midnight forty picked men with two officers, taking only their rifles, ammunition and hand grenades, were to creep up the mountainside toward the beleaguered post, carrying enough dynamite to blow it up. A quarter of an hour afterward the rest of the battalion would climb the ridge facing the enemy in order to cover the garrison's retreat in case of pursuit.

Competition was keen for the distinction of being one of the attacking party. Everybody wanted to go, —even the muleteers offered their services. Robert and "Al Jolson," on account of the excellence of their physical condition, were among those chosen. Camp was made behind the last ridge, on the crest of which the machine guns were concealed along with the two mountain howitzers. They would be useless during the assault,—as dangerous to friend as to foe; if the trenches were to be carried it must be by hand grenades and cold steel.

At dark the men lay down in their tents without undressing, ready to start at a moment's notice. Down there deep in the ravine, the desultory firing about the fort was just audible; "tap"—"tap-tap"—"bo-om!" Robert felt in his bosom for Nancy's picture. It was in its customary place. He wondered what she was doing at that moment. Some other Johnny would be there playing his ukelele, maybe. Or perhaps she'd have some of her real "men" there, like that poodle-faking tin soldier, "Captain" Snayde.

A sneaking wish that Captain Snayde might be one of the present party tickled his fancy for a moment.

His father and mother would be just getting up from the table, and Mary, the help, would be clattering in the pantry preliminary to an early dash to the movies. "Gee!" he thought. "Wish they could see me now!" Wouldn't they throw a fit? Suppose he got it in the neck that night? Was it fair to kick in without letting them know what had become of him? Would it be right to let his mother go on hoping from year to year that he would walk in some day and toss his hat on the front hall rack as if nothing had happened? And Nancy! She ought to know if he checked out.

He lit a candle end and carefully wrote down his military number, his assumed *nom de guerre* of "Dooley," and his father's name and address. The words "14 Bellevue Avenue, Rome, Ohio," gave him a queer feeling. He swallowed a couple of times. Can that soft stuff! He was a legionary now!

"Listen, Al!" he said, "if I croak, and you come through, get word to my folks, somehow, will you?"

Well, he'd had a pretty good life. He didn't care much now what happened to him, so long as he was not captured. That should never be. His last grenade he would keep for his own personal use. They should never bury him up to the neck and pour molasses over his head! The Berbers should never give him to their women to hack up alive. He sought quickly to turn his mind to more agreeable matters. He

was on the whole rather proud of himself. His first real engagement, and yet he didn't feel so very different from the way he used to before a football game. His hand crept toward Nancy's picture once more. How could she have treated him so! Serve her jolly well right if he did get killed. Might bring her to her senses, give her something to think about! How had she ever had the nerve to claim they weren't engaged? What did it mean when a nice girl let you kiss her like that! And *she* had kissed *him*! That day he took her canoeing and they lay down in the grass above the dam. . . .

A painful kick in the shins brought him from a reclining posture on the banks of the Crawfish River, Ohio, to his knees on a shoulder of the Middle Atlas. All about him men were stumbling to their feet, cursing under their breath, buttoning their tunics, tightening their belts. He remembered where he was and a chill hit him in the stomach. He gripped Pepin le Grand by the shoulder and shook him.

"Au 'voir, mon petit!" he whispered.

Pepin reached up and squeezed Robert's hand. *"Au 'voir! Bon voyage, Mistah Dooley!"* he muttered drowsily.

Robert found his rifle and crept out into the darkness to where by the light of a lantern the sergeant was checking off the roll. The moon had shrouded herself, and a pale, weird light distorted the rocks and precipices as they silently climbed up out of the ravine and across the ridge. A spot of white on the

mountainside above showed them their objective, but first they had to descend once more to the river bank below. Here it was so dark that they had to feel their way and several times lost track of their direction. They forded the icy current, each man holding his rifle high above his head, and when they at last assembled on the opposite edge of the glacial stream two men were missing. It was useless to try to find them for the slightest noise would have warned the enemy on the height above.

Shivering, they huddled around the lieutenant and received their instructions. They were to form a line, at ten paces apart, and in bare feet were to creep up the slope until close to the enemy sentries. These they were to shoot and, at signal, were to hurl their grenades, rush the trenches and assist the waiting garrison to make a dash for liberty.

"Stick close to me, hon!" whispered "Al," showing a white gleam of teeth. "This ain't no place for a single man!"

In the ghostly light Robert could hardly see the forms of the legionaries on either side of him. The ascent was sharp, the flinty soil an agony to his feet. From time to time they paused for breath, until at the end of twenty minutes the plateau rose just over them. Not a sound came from the trenches. Their approach was unsuspected, for the white-robed sentries were clearly visible against the sky line. A hundred yards farther on loomed the blockhouse. Their task—if susceptible of performance—was to break

through the trenches and convoy their imprisoned comrades back through them again before the Arabs could recover themselves.

Robert saw "Al" raise his rifle and level it at one of the sentries. The unseen lieutenant blew his whistle; there was a crash that set the vast amphitheatre aroar as, hurling their grenades, the legionaries started to rush the trench. Instantly it seemed to Robert as if the whole Atlas had come alive. Amid a bedlam of shouts and yells, the snorting of horses, the braying of mules, hundreds of figures appeared upon the plateau, uttering the shrill native war cry so like that of an American Indian.

"*Ul-ul-ul-ul Ullah Akbar!*" they screamed, "*Ul-ul-ul—!*" at the same time firing wildly into the night.

Robert scrambled across the first trench, stumbling over the prone body of Jolson's sentinel, and paused for an instant in its shelter. They were outnumbered twenty to one, but in spite of their numerical advantage, the Berbers were disorganized, having no knowledge of the size of the attacking force. They had evidently abandoned the outer trench and were gathering in the second. The longer he waited the more of them there would be. He had lost contact with his comrades, but he knew that like himself they must be making for the blockhouse. He threw a couple of his grenades into the thickest of clumps of white, and in the disorder following the explosions dashed with fixed bayonet across the sec-

ond trench into the mass of yelling figures that, like white sheep, were pouring down the mountain-side. Only the confusion incident to the darkness, and the fact that their uniforms were less conspicuous than the burnouses of the enemy, saved any of the attacking party from almost instant death.

Robert, hurling his grenades, dodged and cut his way through the Berbers until, along with the lieutenant and six other men, he managed to get inside the blockhouse. They found there the commander, a grizzled veteran, his jaw bound up with a bloody handkerchief, with but nine survivors several of whom were badly wounded. The fort was a shambles. The two officers saluted each other. The turmoil outside rendered speech difficult.

"Half my men have been killed," said the commander. "My ammunition is exhausted. We have thrown our last grenade. I attempted a sortie, but several of my men were wounded and I had to return to pick them up."

"We must remain here until daylight!" returned the lieutenant breathlessly. "I too have lost most of my men. We cannot evacuate the fort without support. If we do not return by sunrise the major will send another detachment."

A ghastly smile hovered for an instant upon the face of the older man. He shook his head.

"It is too late! We cannot stay! The post is mined. When I thought your attack had failed I ordered the fuses to be lighted. It will blow up in a few moments."

He straightened. "After all, we can die but once! Thank you for your heroic attempt to come to our assistance."

They shook hands. He turned to the survivors: "*Gardez-vous!* Prepare to charge with bayonets! *Par colonne trois!*" Hurrying to the gate of the block-house, he turned and saluted. "*Vive la France! Vive la Légion! Marche!*" he cried, and, throwing open the door, charged at the head of his remaining men into the seething mob outside.

In an instant each was engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand encounter with half a dozen Berbers. Robert, forgetful of his resolve, threw his last grenade into a group who charged him. There was a terrific detonation and they melted away. About him the legionaries were selling their lives as dearly as they could. He saw the lieutenant fall, shot in the leg, and hacked instantly to pieces. Some of the men were fighting with knives against overwhelming odds. It seemed to Robert that an attempt was being made to take them alive. He had forgotten all about the mine which at any moment might blow them to atoms.

"This way, *copains!*" he shouted. "Let's kill as many of 'em as we can!"

With a handful of legionaries he fought his way to the edge of the plateau. By this time it had grown lighter and Robert could see that they were almost surrounded. Rather than be taken he resolved to throw himself on his own bayonet. At

that moment a cheikh on a white mule appeared on the slope behind him. He saw the gleam of a knife, turned, and throwing himself upon this assailant pinioned his right arm and dragged him from his seat. Tightly locked together, they swayed in a death grapple on the edge of the precipice. The man's muscles were like iron. The burnoose of the Berber swathed Robert's arms and body as he tried ineffectually to trip him. Over the cheikh's shoulder he saw a girl with a dagger in her hand waiting her chance to plunge it into his body. It was all up! Good-by, everybody! Nancy!

Then the world went white and the night bellied fire. With a crash the mountain was torn asunder. He felt himself hurled through the air—falling—falling. . . .

VI

MRS. SHAFTER sat sewing on the back porch in her rocker guarding the side door, while Mary ran down to the Square for the bunch of asparagus she had forgotten to bring home with her in the morning. During the months that Robert had been away his mother had changed perceptibly. Her hair was no grayer, and she was, if anything, more erect than before, but her eyes had a look hitherto unknown and there were new lines upon her face, which gave her less an appearance of added years than of self-knowledge and determination.

She had, up to the moment of the departure of her son, regarded it as her Christian duty not only to obey her husband, as she had promised at the altar to do, but to honor his opinions to the entire effacement of her own. Since she was a woman of intelligence this self-abnegatory process of swallowing the arbitrary dictates of another's mind had resulted in giving her a chronic mental indigestion, the objective symptoms of which were a primary vacillation followed by depression.

While the Hon. Hiram W. Shafter loved and respected his wife he was a firm believer in letting folks know who was the boss of one's own home, and sufficiently domineering and opinionated to expect her meekly to follow where he led. For

twenty years she had done so with the result that he now regarded himself as the local fount of all wisdom and as the autocrat of her conscience. His position as head of the bank, owner of the Crawfish River sawmill, and Republican boss of Union County had not tended to decrease his self-esteem. Was he not a friend—or at least an acquaintance—of the Hon. Myron Herrick and the Hon. "Nick" Longworth? Had he not shaken hands with both President McKinley and President Harding? He was and he had! And out of the fact had grown a genuine feeling on his part that he was the cock on the weather vane of national politics.

The revolt of Robert had given him a shock second only to what he might have felt if his wife had suddenly brought an action for divorce. His self-complacency refused to admit the obvious fact that his only son did not regard his will as authoritative or himself as personally necessary. He preferred to take the position that the boy had temporarily hidden himself to avoid the consequences of his defiance of parental authority. He was probably just up to Columbus working in a garage or something—he'd be back all right! But as the months passed and Robert did not come back his wounded pride changed first to sorrow and then to a devastating suspicion that he might have been deficient in educational tact, something which he would have died rather than let his wife surmise.

She, poor woman, had long since decided that

Robert must be dead and blamed herself for it. If only she had had some strength of mind, instead of having weakly acquiesced in a parental attitude which her maternal instinct had told her to be misguided! Both of them put on a brave front, however, insistently asserting a conviction that Robert would presently "get tired of it" and come home. What "it" was they dared not ask themselves, and night after night they lay silently side by side, each pretending to be asleep, thinking of all the perils to which their only son might be exposed, of thundering machinery, of swift moving wheels, of white-hot molten metal, of mountainous waves and icy storms,—of every danger in fact except the right one. They did not give up hope. It was strange, they admitted, that he did not write, but that could be explained if he had shipped before the mast, or gone on an exploring expedition, or done any of those other crazy things that boys did in books.

"Sure, he'll turn up!" declared Mr. Shafter with false heartiness. "Some day like as not we'll get a postal from Seattle or New Orleans or Oklahoma sayin' he's on his way and how he's been waiting until he could write us that he'd made a million dollars! It would be just like him to stay quiet until he felt he'd made good. Cheer up, mother! Robert ain't the first boy that's run away from home—and come back."

"We may both be dead by that time!" she mourned. "If only I knew where he was! I hate to

think that possibly he's way off somewhere without anybody to tell him what things he ought not to eat and no one to take care of him if he got sick."

Yet she never ceased to set his place at table or to have something ready and waiting for him in case he should unexpectedly appear, and when she sat on the back porch ostensibly to watch the side door it was less to guard the house against the approach of tramps than to be in an advantageous position to glimpse any one who might be coming down Bellevue Avenue.

Some one was coming, only it was not Robert.

"I do believe it's Nancy Vernon!" she said to herself. "How d'y' do, Nancy!" she exclaimed, getting up and kissing her as the latter reached the steps. "How pretty you look! I hope you enjoyed Atlantic City. What a lovely dress!"

Nancy appeared older and her face had lost the rather confident look it had worn on her return from New York. She, too, had matured.

"I'm so glad to see you!" Nancy returned the kiss. "Have you heard—anything?" she asked with a pathetic look of inquiry.

Mrs. Shafter pulled up a chair for her visitor.

"Sit down, dear.—No, not a single word yet! But I'm sure we shall. Robert always hated to write letters, even when he was a little boy. Anyhow I comfort myself by saying that 'no news is good news.' " Her lips trembled and the tears came into her eyes. "Oh, Nancy! I won't believe he's dead! I won't. You don't think he is, do you?"

"Of course not!" responded Nancy. "Something happened to make him go away and the same thing keeps him from writing."

"You really think that?" asked Mrs. Shafter eagerly.

"I'm sure of it!" replied the girl.

"Oh, Nancy!"

Mrs. Shafter suddenly burst into tears. Nancy got up and put her arms about her.

"Don't cry!" she said, although she was on the verge of breaking down herself. "He's sure to come back!"

"It—it was all our own fault that he went away!" sobbed Mrs. Shafter. "If we had only been a little less harsh about his failure to pass his college examinations! His father took him to task very severely! He refused to give him a second chance as he easily could have done. Robert simply hated the idea of going into the bank. They had words about it—I don't know just what they were, but he was terribly hurt. If I'd only had more of a mind of my own, I could have prevented it! I can't bear the thought of being to blame for losing my son!"

"You're not to blame!" answered Nancy. "Or, if you are, only the least little bit. I've never told you before, Mrs. Shafter, but Robert and I were practically engaged. Not actually,—but we'd talked about it in a general way and even gone so far as to discuss a house on Hillside Avenue. When I came back from school last spring I was rather horrid to Robert. I even pretended that he thought things had gone

further than they had. Finally he got angry and insisted on my saying right then and there whether we were engaged—'yes or no'! And, naturally, I said 'no'!"

Mrs. Shafter wiped her eyes.

"Of course I suspected there was something between you," she said, "with him over at your house every minute of the day and going off motoring with you and all that! I must say, I'd have welcomed you as a daughter-in-law, Nancy! It makes me feel better to think that we're all a little to blame!"

Mrs. Shafter drew the girl to her and pulled the bobbed head down on her shoulder. "Poor little Nancy! I know just how you feel. Now don't you worry! Robert will come marching up the steps one of these fine days and the first thing he'll ask will be, 'Say, Mother, how's Nancy!'"

The consolation party was still going on when Mr. Shafter appeared.

"Hello, Nancy!" he remarked gruffly. "Did you have a good time? How's your mother?"

"Mother's wonderful! She's talking now of taking a trip around the world," replied Nancy.

"A trip around the world!" snorted Mr. Shafter. "What the dickens does she want to go gallivanting all over the lot for? Why can't she settle down and enjoy herself at home?"

"Perhaps if she'd had a chance to go when she was younger she wouldn't want to now," said his wife. "It seems to me if Carrie Vernon takes a fancy

to go to Europe she's a perfect right to indulge it. There's nothing to keep her at home."

Mr. Shafter looked at her in surprised disapproval. From his ordinarily meek spouse this was a revolutionary remark.

"H'm!" he said. "Perhaps you'll be wanting to go next! I always thought you held woman's place to be the home."

"And so I do!" she retorted. "But perhaps if sometimes folks had a chance to try things the sooner they'd get over wanting to do them!"

Nancy feeling that her presence might prove embarrassing remarked that she must be going along, that she had to help her mother unpack. Mr. Shafter escorted her to the gate. Even if he was a little scornful of her mother's pseudo-youthful eccentricities he had always admired Nancy. In fact he was a little afraid of her. In her present modish street costume and coiffure he admired her more than ever. He wondered if she ever would have taken a shine to Robert! No, the idea was incredible—an elegant young woman like that! She'd marry one of those diplomatic fellows probably and live in London or Paris or Rome, Italy. Carrie Vernon made him laugh! She was probably after a husband herself! These women! No fools like old fools!

"Look here, Mattie!" he said as he rejoined his wife on the back porch. "What did you mean talking that way about going to Europe?—At your age!"

"I didn't know as I mentioned anything about

going to Europe," she replied calmly, continuing to sew. "I merely said I didn't know any reason why Carrie Vernon shouldn't go if she wanted to."

There was something about her attitude that baffled him.

"That wasn't all of it. What did you mean by saying what you did about it being good for folks to go away?"

"Simply that I believe in foreign travel," she answered placidly. "It tends to broaden people, just as living in a small place may make 'em narrow. I guess in the long run travelling makes 'em more contented with their own lot."

Mr. Shafter was beginning to be annoyed.

"Think I'm narrow? Is that what you're driving at?"

"I wouldn't say so, even if I thought it," she replied.

He came over to her.

"Are you hinting anything about Robert?" he demanded.

Mrs. Shafter laid down her sewing.

"I'm not hinting anything!" She answered firmly. "But now that you've introduced the subject I do think that, if we'd been a little more sympathetic about his wanting to go out West and see something of the world, it would have been a good thing."

"You think I was too hard on him about those examinations?"

"I think you might have given him another chance!"

The fact that the Hon. Hiram now held precisely the same opinion only served to increase his exasperation.

"You're all wrong!" he exploded. "Let me tell you something! If I had the whole thing to do over again I'd do it just the same way. What the American people need to learn is that there ain't anything anywhere on God's green foot-stool better'n what they can get right here in their own home towns! Let Carrie Vernon go hiking all over the globe if she wants to! An' lug her daughter along with her! She won't find any finer scenery than there is in Union County, nor better victuals nor nicer people than there are here in Rome. There ain't any religion that can touch the Christian religion, nor any form of government anywhere near as good as the Constitution of the United States." To make his pronunciamento complete he might well have added "or any better party than the Republican party!"

"Then," said his wife, "it might be a good thing to have her go and find it out for herself!"

Bloody but unbowed, the Hon. Hiram, perceiving that a new order had been established, grumbled off to his library. He couldn't make out what the hell had come over Mattie, she used to be so docile and sweet-tempered.

"Damn!" he shouted at the plaster cast of Daniel Webster. He would have liked to smash the glass

dome over the stuffed woodpecker and hurl the "Memorial History of Columbus" through the window. Yet there were tears in his eyes. The surface anger of this pompous little provincial burgher was but the tide rip over a current of emotion that threatened to sweep his life away. The loss of Robert had in fact nearly killed him. No longer did he greatly value his bank, his lumber mill, or even the local chairmanship of his political party. He wanted his only son! He could not bear to look around the library, so vividly did it remind him of that last evening when he had told Robert what was the matter with him.

"Wish I hadn't lambasted him quite so hard!" he muttered. "I didn't really mean half of it.—Oh, damn!"

VII

*"When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out to cut up what remains,
Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier."*

THAT he was still of this world was brought to Robert's attention by an excruciating pain in his back due to the jagged stone half perforating it as he lay among the boulders of the ravine. At first he was conscious only of the torture which, at each attempted breath, dwarfed all minor agonies. Gradually, outside the burning periphery of this nearer torment, he became conscious of a stiffened, bruised, and aching physical area only slightly less painful, which appeared to have once been his body, but which, as yet, was incapable of exterior sensation. A fierce and relentless sun beat blisteringly upon his head, now seemingly of enormous size, and which buzzed and throbbed without ceasing.

He raised a lacerated hand to his face to relieve his eyes from the blinding light and was vaguely surprised to find it encrusted with blood. Slowly the recognition that he was alive came to him; his presence at the bottom of the ravine began to connect itself with the still vivid memory of his struggle with the cheikh on the white mule. The picture be-

came complete;—the hot, tainted breath of the old man in his face, the creeping approach of the girl behind him, the sudden flash, which for an instant had illuminated the barbaric scene, before the impact which had hurled him over the abyss.

Above him rose the steep, snow-covered, stony slope leading to the plateau, dotted with dead legionaries. One lay just beside him, the body twisted into a grotesque attitude of prayer. Farther down the ravine the white mule sprawled upon its back with its legs in the air, while across the stream a half-naked corpse hung limply from a point of rock upon which it had been impaled. Robert almost envied it hanging there dead and senseless.

And then he became aware that he was not alone with Death in that valley. He was being watched. Perched upon a boulder some twenty feet away sat the motionless figure of a girl—the same girl that he had seen the night before waiting her chance to stab him on the plateau. Cross-legged she sat there facing him with unblinking eyes, her knife in her hand. All the pictures of *mutilés* upon the walls of the Legion's *casernes* flashed again across the cinema of his mind, all the gruesome tales he had heard around the camp fires on desert marches, of heads flayed and eyelids severed, of bodies hacked and disembowelled. She was only awaiting his resuscitation to commence her fiendish business. Helpless and at her mercy, he must lie there and let her exploit his body as a field for her savage ingenuity. Well, if she didn't hurry

up, it would make no difference! She could do what she liked once he was dead.

Behind him he heard the rattle of shale, of stones jostled by human feet. He could not turn his head, could only imagine what this new horror might be. Then a shadow fell across his body and a woollen garment scraped his cheek; a malignant, pock-marked face was thrust into his and a bony hand clutched at his neck, while another ransacked the fragments of uniform that still clung to him. The vultures were gathering; it was going to be a party! If only he had kept that last grenade!

The girl had slipped down from her rock and was quietly moving toward the marauder. She was of medium height, but muscular and lithe as a wild animal. Evidently she regarded the fingers of the body-looter now searching Robert's breast as a trespass upon her preserves. The Berber was engaged in making a thorough search of the dead bodies, for he had a huge bundle of burnouses and uniforms, as well as a pile of rifles, swords, bayonets and pistols. As she approached he straightened himself and made a threatening gesture toward her with his dagger. The next instant he reeled backwards with a choking gasp as the girl's knife was driven through his neck until it protruded from the back.

The startling character of the blow, which had been inflicted without apparent change of expression on her part, aroused Robert to complete sensibility. His turn next, probably! Unemotionally

she placed her foot on the neck of the dead man, withdrew her knife, wiped it upon his burnoose, turned from him and stood gazing down upon her prey. He expected to see a face as ghoulisn as that of the Arab she had slain. Yet there was nothing fiendish or brutal in the big oval brown eyes touched with kohl which looked into his own, apparently without either anger or pity. At that moment all he asked for was a swift and certain ending of his misery.

He closed his eyes and threw back his head inviting her thrust, but it did not come. Instead, she bent over and grabbing the dead Berber by the feet, dragged his body some distance away. Then, going to the stream, she returned with a cup of water and held it to his lips. Although it revived him instantly it also served to augment the pain from his wounds and, in spite of his effort not to do so, he uttered a groan. Instead of releasing him, however, she lifted him bodily in her arms and carried him into the shadow of a rock, where she propped him against a ledge. Going once more to the stream for water, she silently bathed his face and hands, hardly looking at him the while; then, searching in the folds of her *djellaba*, she brought out a fragment of bread and a few dates. He was, however, feeling too sick to eat, for the moving had made him faint. He was not even interested in her efforts to make him comfortable. He wanted to die,—the sooner the better.

From where he was sitting Robert could see along the ravine skirting the slope for nearly half a mile. There was no sign of life anywhere. The girl disappeared, returning again presently with two rifles which she proceeded to load from his cartridge belt. One of them she placed on the ground beside him. Then she retired to a neighboring boulder and took up her original position with the other rifle across her knees. During all this time she had said not one word; indeed, he could have understood little if anything of what she might have said had she seen fit to speak. It was clear that she herself entertained no hostile designs upon him, and was even prepared if necessary to help him sell his life as dearly as he could. Why, was a mystery.

With returning vitality the wounds in his back, sides and legs began to agonize Robert more than ever. It grew hotter and hotter, but the girl shifted his position with that of the sun and kept him amply supplied with water, until at length he fell into a coma of exhaustion. When he once more came to himself the sun was sinking behind the western peaks of the Atlas and an icy wind was drawing down the ravine. He was stiff and numb, but his head was clear and the only wound from which he still acutely suffered was that in his back. The instant he stirred, however, a hundred others cried out in agony.

The girl stood up, looked at the sun, descended from her boulder and offered Robert some food

again. This time he ate a little of the bread. Then by dint of great effort she managed to get her arms around him, lift him from the ground, and carry him for perhaps a hundred yards along the edge of the stream. In this way they proceeded with frequent rests for perhaps two miles, the latter part of their journey being through a narrow defile from which at intervals smaller gulches led into the hills. At length abandoning the path she turned into one of these and dragged Robert through a barrier of thorn bushes to a cave concealed in the side of the cliff. Carrying him to the rear of the cave she laid him on a shelf of rock, hung a burnoose across the opening, and built a small fire.

Once more he sank into a coma from which he did not awake until daylight. The embers of the fire were still smouldering. He lay on a thick burnoose, another rolled into a pillow supported his head, while two more were carefully wrapped about him. Among the ashes simmered a canister of tea and near-by had been placed a round loaf of bread, a pile of dates, and a cup of water. He was still suffering great pain from the wound in his back, but he ate ravenously and presently fell fast asleep again.

He regained consciousness to hear the first crackling and to see a bright blaze flickering against the walls of his hiding-place. He had no means of telling time, but he knew that he must have slept through the day for no light entered the mouth of the cave. The girl sat beside him and between them lay a fresh

supply of food. After he had eaten, she fetched water, bathed him, and once more resumed her position at his side.

When he next awoke day had come and she had vanished, but more bread and dates had been placed within his reach, as well as the two rifles, a cartridge belt of ammunition, and a horse-pistol. In this fashion he remained in the cave alone, visited by her each night. He was now feeling much stronger, but still moved only with the greatest difficulty. During this time he saw no living thing except the girl herself, an occasional lizard or a horned viper, and the scarab-beetles which lumbered among the stones.

The villages which the column had passed upon the march had, without exception, been deserted; but it was obvious that the girl must procure the food from some near-by settlement or *kasbah* of an as yet unsubdued tribe to which she probably belonged. Should its members discover that she was thus treacherously harboring one of their enemies, her life would be forfeit as well as his own. This was probably the reason why she never visited him by day, and why, when she did appear, it was inevitably long after sunset.

With the blowing-up of the fort and the simultaneous annihilation of besiegers and besieged alike, the point would have been abandoned and the column ordered back to the advanced post established by the *Groupe Mobile*, leaving the surrounding coun-

try still in the hands of the *indigènes*. Very likely the village in which she lived was only a short distance away. He had long since given up the idea that she was reserving him as a choice offering to her tribe for purpose of future torture. During their extraordinary association the girl had uttered hardly a word. He had tried her in French without result and his Berber was too elementary for any but the simplest purposes. She went about her business silently and methodically, without smiling, and had it not been for an occasional flash in her eye when she was annoyed, or some slight expression of impatience, he would have thought her absolutely stolid.

By the fire-light she was far prettier than when he first saw her crouching upon her boulder in the ravine. Her face was round, with high cheek-bones like most Berber women, the skin apricot-colored and of a rich, creamy tinge, the nose aquiline, the mouth small, but determined, with a short upper lip, her expression a curious blending of childishness and maturity,—a beautiful young barbarian. For clothing she wore a *djellaba* and a cotton shift, hooked over the shoulders with silver clasps, and wound about with a vague drapery. He had no means of determining her age. Used as he had become to only veiled women, the sight of her uncovered face gave him a fresh and unaccustomed delight, although he could tell neither by her expression nor her conduct whether she regarded him as a prisoner, a patient, or a possible husband.

He had been able to gather that her name was Aisha and that she belonged to the Aït Salah, but although he repeatedly pointed at himself and explained that he was to be called "Robert," "Bobby," or "Bob," he never succeeded in getting her to utter any sound even remotely resembling it. As nearly as he could determine, he was known to her as "Chukh." The enforced silence eventually got on his nerves and he found himself talking aloud in English half to her and half to himself. Doubtless could "Al Jolson" or "Pepin le Grand" have been there to see their erstwhile comrade propped against the wall of his cave, smoking a native cigarette in the company of a charming young Berber lady, from whose ears dangled elaborate and delicately chiselled brass crescents and upon whose wrists and ankles clinked a miscellaneous collection of hardware as weighty as it was exotic, they would have been surprised to see him grin at her and give vent to something like the following: "Well, Aisha, old girl, you're a pretty good skate! Only why you are doing all this certainly beats me! If your papa knew where you went on your nights out, I guess you would get it in the neck, where you gave it to that bandit! Well, dearie, you're a good looker if you're not much of a talker, and I certainly enjoy your society. I'd like it better though if I had some idea of what was going to happen to me next. Suppose some fine night your papa runs into you on his way back from the lodge and carves us both up? There wouldn't be much fun in that

now, would there! Don't you think it's about time for me to be getting out of here?"

To all of which Aisha would listen without so much as a smile, occasionally returning the pressure of his hand or laying her own on his shoulder. As the time passed, her coiffure and costume seemed to him to become slightly more elaborate. Not that he fancied it! Why any woman should swathe her head in red and blue foulard or her body in half a dozen voluminous skirts was beyond him, or why she should wear a bed-sheet thrown over the whole business. She wore no shoes and he liked to look at her feet, which were small with the toenails stained a bright red.

Since his clothes were in rags, Aisha fitted him out in a complete Berber costume from the marauder's bundle, thus insuring warmth as well as a disguise in the event of discovery by a casual vagrant. The only part which he retained of his original costume was his shoes, and with a two weeks' beard on his chin and wrapped in a burnoose, he might, under superficial scrutiny, pass as a Berber. Coming upon the photograph of Nancy during the process of rehabilitation, she exhibited her first sign of genuine interest, evidently regarding it as some sort of charm. Fire-wood was the chief necessity since the nights were very cold, and Aisha usually arrived carrying a bundle of it upon her back, which by careful nursing was enough to keep a small blaze alive throughout the night.

By day he lay on the sand in the sun, looking up between the towering cliffs of the ravine into the pale blue sky where he could see the buzzards wheeling and weaving over the plateau. By that time there would not be a shred of flesh left upon the bones of any of his comrades. He wondered what had become of "Al Jolson." Dead probably along with the rest; either killed in the attack, blown over the precipice, or cut in pieces by Berber women. Doubtless he himself was the only survivor. But apart from the momentary solace of warmth and food, there seemed little object in survival. Once his hiding-place was suspected, or once he should set foot in one of the larger valleys, death seemed an absolute certainty. Rather curiously, the thought of this did not greatly agitate him. He had suffered so much pain and been exposed to death on so many previous occasions that he had become callous to what fate might have in store for him. Sufficient for the day was the evil thereof!

Yet as he sat in the sun beside his cave, munching the bread, dates and occasional morsels of chicken or mutton, and drinking the sweet, mint-flavored tea, he began to feel that, after all, life was by no means an entirely disagreeable experience. It was the first rest, worthy of the name, he had had since joining the Legion and, in spite of his wounds and a couple of fractured ribs, he began to experience again the old joy of living which he had known at home, but which had been crushed out of him

during the first few months by sheer fatigue. He was only just able to look out for himself, however, to tend the fire, and to crawl out into the sunlight for a few hours at noon-time, with the two loaded rifles beside him.

Aisha always extinguished the fire before leaving in order that the smoke might not disclose his hiding place to any wandering villager, but every day that he remained longer in the neighborhood increased the chance of his being discovered or of Aisha's being followed to his place of concealment. It was even quite upon the cards that some other native might take it into his head to occupy the premises. Any such tenancy, either joint or common, would involve a fight for life in which in his present condition he would be foredoomed unless, indeed, he shot the newcomer on sight, which in itself might serve as an advertisement to others of his whereabouts. To remain any longer in a locality infested by armed bandits and the scene of actual fighting seemed suicidal.

Pointing first at his breast and then at his feet, he imitated the motion of walking with his fingers, indicating a direction presumably that of Fez.

"Well, honey," he remarked, "I guess it's time for me to toddle—provided of course you are willing to let me go. I can't say that I'd enjoy getting that little dagger of yours in my Adam's apple. It's up to you. What do you say? Shall I start along? And, if I go, where am I going and how am I going to get there?"

His words meant nothing to her, but she comprehended the meaning of his signs and frowned. Then she pointed first at herself and then at him, and made the walking sign with her fingers. He was startled. He knew that in case he should be captured her presence would mean instant death for her. After all she had done for him, was it fair to expose her to such a possibility? He owed his life entirely to her. He ought now to assume alone the risk of making his escape.

"No," he said, shaking his head.

A look of disappointment came into the girl's eyes. Clasp ing her hands she knelt down and raised them in supplication; then threw her arms around his knees and clasped them tightly to her. He was deeply touched. He had no idea that he had aroused any such emotion in this apparently stolid and wholly inscrutable child of the *bled*. He knew nothing of her antecedents or connections, whether she were maid, wife or widow. So far as he knew she might have already fatally compromised herself by what she had done. He was forced to admit that his chances of getting out of the mountains, surrounded as he was by fanatical and barbarous tribesmen, when he could only travel by night, and where his way was barred by a tangle of ravines, ridges, and precipices, were about a thousand to one. Indeed, in his present weakened condition, it was not likely that he could walk any distance without assistance. But, after all, it was her own affair! He had not in-

vited her to save his life and he could not be held responsible if she wanted to save it again!

"All right," he agreed, "if that's how it is! I'd no idea you felt so strongly about it! I guess if I ever expect to see Union County again, you'll have to go with me, at least as far as Sefrou, and maybe farther."

He stroked her head and she, understanding what he meant, seized his hand and pressed it to her lips.

The next night she did not arrive until long after the usual hour, and when she reached the cave she was breathless from running. Hurriedly she rolled up a bundle of extra burnouses and placed their provisions within it. She was about to extinguish the fire, when suddenly she seized Robert's wrist and dragged him into the back of the cave. He had heard no sound, but he realized that her trained ears had recognized the indication of some human presence outside. Both rifles were leaning against the wall at the mouth of the cave where they were always kept ready for instant use. The pistol was lying beside the bundle of clothing. Robert observed that Aisha was silently loosening her tunic with her left hand as, with her right, she unsheathed the long knife which she always carried at her waist. The tunic fell to the ground, leaving her standing only in her thin sleeveless shift. At the same instant he saw a face peering into the cave.

The intruder, apparently satisfied that it was empty, cautiously advanced toward the fire. He was

a middle-aged man, rather corpulent, and whatever weapons he carried were concealed beneath his burnoose. He had evidently been running also, for he too was panting, and the thought instantly came to Robert that he might be some jealous lover of Aisha's who had sought to track her down to a supposed rendezvous and whom she had been endeavoring to throw off the track. Should the Berber chance to see the pistol they would be utterly at his mercy.

As the stranger bent to examine the bundle, Aisha sprang upon him. The distance between them, however, gave him time to resume an upright position and draw his dagger. They struck at each other simultaneously; and each caught the other's right wrist with the left hand. For a second or two they stood there breast to breast, their arms taut as cables. Then the man made a violent, but unsuccessful, effort to wrench his weapon from the girl's grasp.

Had it not been for her greater freedom of movement and his previous loss of breath, he might have succeeded, but as it was, she clung desperately to him, her fingers gripping his wrist like iron hooks. Robert could hear the quick intake of breath through their nostrils. If he could reach the pistol and manœuvre himself to one side, he might be able to get a fair shot at the Berber who was now clearly marking time to recover his wind. The girl evidently realized the temporary character of her advantage, for she began to press her adversary backward with all the force of which she was capable, at the same

time seeking to trip him. Luck favored her. In the effort to prevent this, the man inadvertently stepped upon the end of his burnoose and losing his balance toppled over backward upon the fire. He gave a yell of agony as the smell of singed flesh filled the cave. But the shock and fierceness of the pain seemed to lend him new strength. Next instant he had yanked himself free, rolled over, and staggered to his feet, his burnoose a mass of flames.

But for the fact that Aisha stood between him and the mouth of the cave, he might have escaped. As it was, he must fight his way out before he should be burned alive, for at his first attempt to extinguish his burnoose Aisha's knife would be between his ribs. The advantage now lay entirely with her, for she had but to await the chance that must come when he could no longer stand the agony of the flames. His was a choice between fire and cold steel. He took the less imminent and lunged fiercely at the girl through the curtain of smoke, then suddenly leaped backward, and tore the now blazing garment from his shoulders. It was done so quickly that Aisha had no time to avail herself of her momentary opportunity. Once more they faced each other, crouching,

Robert saw that the Berber was preparing himself for a plunge, for he retreated a step or two toward the rear of the cave and took a firmer grip of the earthen floor with his feet. Evidently he was going to stake everything upon a single overpowering rush. This was Robert's chance. Stepping swiftly

from his place of concealment, he swept up the blazing burnoose from the floor and smothered the Berber's head and shoulders. With a choking cry the man strove to throw it off, but as he lifted his hands to his head, Aisha hurled herself at him and drove her knife into his chest. He grunted and the dagger dropped from his hand. Then as he reeled and sank toward the ground, she yanked free her knife and stabbed him again and again, in face, ribs and belly. The smoke, the odor of the scorched body, the reek of the fresh blood hissing upon the hot stones in addition to the ghastliness of the sight itself were too much for Robert. He turned sick and groped his way to the mouth of the cave.

All was quiet out there and a white path lay between the cliffs where the moonlight fell upon the sand. The air was balmy, faintly aromatic of the sun-dried driss, of aloes and desert herbs. He sat down limply and looked up at the stars dripping like lamps in the blue alley above. It was incredible that death lurked but a few feet away. The thorn bushes parted silently, and Aisha came out with the two rifles and a cartridge belt which she buckled about him. Then she went back and presently reappeared carrying a heavy pack. First, smoothing the surface of the sand to conceal the footprints before the mouth of the cave, she swung both rifles over her shoulder, pulled Robert to his feet, and with her arm about his waist guided him along the border of the cliffs, from time to time pausing to listen for any

sound of pursuit. They reached the ravine at the foot of the plateau upon which had stood the blockhouse, forded the stream, and slowly climbed the opposite ridge.

The moon was high, making travel far easier than upon the night of the attack when the relief party had lost its way. It gleamed upon the distant uplands of the Atlas and turned the neighboring sand patches to snow. Then they stumbled down into the darkness behind the ridge until they came upon the column's abandoned bivouac, easily identified by its walls, by the trampled footprints of mules, scattered tent-pegs and camp litter. Here they rested a while until Aisha signified that it was time to move on. The ascent of the second and third ridges was more difficult, and by the time that they had reached the valley below the moon had set and day was at hand. They had made about eight miles. Robert was too exhausted to go farther, and they had no choice but to conceal themselves under the freshet-bitten bank of a dried water-course. There was no pasturage thereabout and the place seemed reasonably safe from disturbance.

They ate some bread and drank a little water from their goat-skin bottle, and then Aisha made a couch of burnouses, helped Robert dispose himself upon it and lay down beside him. Instantly he fell into a profound slumber from which he did not awaken until the western sun slanting into his retreat smote him upon the eyes and he found that he was alone.

Her absence troubled him at first. It was unbelievable that she could have deserted him after saving his life for the second time. Then, since one of the rifles was gone, it came to him that she had removed herself somewhere else in order to divert attention from his hiding place in the event of the approach of an enemy.

Aisha returned at dark and they ate again. Pointing to the north she uttered the word "Skowra" and held up one finger,—then, adding three more, "La Kelaa"; from which he gathered that they were one day's journey from the native town of Skowra and four from the fortified French outpost of the latter name. But in answer to his look of inquiry, she shook her head. Indicating the pale glow still lingering above the tumbled escarpment to the west, she held up three fingers. "Taghzout" she said. It was the base from which the *Groupe Mobile* was operating, and the farthest advanced post beyond Sefrou. "Tizi Adni," she continued, waving in the direction from which they had come, and then pointing to herself: "Bou Mhalla."

Thus orientated Robert had a fair idea as to their general position, which he concluded must be on the lower northern slopes of the Massif du Tichkoukt on the head waters of the Oued Atchane in the territory of the Aït Salah, to which tribe Aisha herself in all probability belonged. Bou Mhalla must be her native village.

They ate once more, smoked a cigarette apiece and, when the last vestige of light had faded, resumed

their journey. Following the descent of the dried water-course they came at length upon a wide and stony valley where the walking was much easier and where it was possible to adhere to a general direction. The wind here was less keen and occasionally they trod upon new grass. Aisha set a relentless pace, —why, Robert could not understand, until the moon pushed its silver shield above the Atlas and flooded the whole valley with light. It was almost like a parade ground at high noon and to a hostile eye their white burnouses would make them objects of interest at a vast distance. In shadow only lay safety, so they swung eastward to take advantage of the shelter of the hill.

Robert had all he could do to keep up with Aisha, who swung along carrying her pack, as well as both rifles, as if her load were nothing. To their right a jutting ridge cast a long black shadow across the plain. Toward this they hurried, for once they had gained its shelter they could take their time. They had almost done so, when the silence was shattered by the bark of a dog within a hundred feet of them. Robert would have thrown himself on the ground, but Aisha seized his arm and held him motionless. Where there was a dog there would be a man!

The dog continued its barking in which presently another joined. Then a mule brayed. Breathless they stood there waiting for what would happen next. What danger lay within that lake of black shade? Had they stumbled upon an encampment? If so, was

it that of a herdsman or an armed band? To conceal themselves would be tantamount to advertising hostility. They could only wait. Meantime the barking and braying continued as the carpet of moonlight slowly crept over the plain. They could see the dogs now. The mule swam into view. Then a single black goat's hair tent not higher than three feet above the ground. A nomad! Doubtless he had his *moukala* already trained upon them, as fearful of marauders as were they. Perhaps he would fire anyway, on general principles,—perhaps not. They must take their chance.

Robert felt the girl give him a gentle pull. Changing their direction so as to carry them away from the tent they walked as swiftly as was compatible with silence. A quarter mile farther on they turned into the shadow again, but the moon was travelling faster than they, and soon the whole valley was a lake of silver in which they seemed to be afloat. They had been gradually descending for over an hour, and presently the slope became more abrupt and they found themselves on the bank of a rushing torrent bordered by clumps of walnuts where they rested, ate a few figs and drank. Here Aisha, to Robert's surprise, turned up-stream. Following the river bank they circled the foot of the valley and re-entered the hills. They had dropped, he calculated, nearly a thousand feet since starting and now they were ascending again, but after threading a series of narrow defiles, they emerged into another valley.

where the river forked. Aisha took the bank to the right.

They were now in a wooded and comparatively fertile district. Figs and walnuts, interspersed with olives, small pines, and almond-trees fringed the stream. Once when they threw themselves down upon the greensward Robert found that he was on a bed of tiny star-like flowers. As they lay in the checkered moonlight with the water whispering at their feet, safe for the moment from pursuit, his heart welled with pity and gratitude for the girl beside him. She was as inscrutable as ever. Everything about her remained a mystery. She rarely looked at him. No word of love had passed between them. Yet he was aware that somehow in her barbaric nature he had inspired a loyalty that would not hesitate at death. Would he encounter anything like it again? Would any other woman have done for him what she had done? What would become of her? She could never return to her tribe. Without protection she would be at the mercy of the first nomad whose path she crossed. Her fate would be worse in one of the French fortified towns. He knew only too well what it would be in the cities. At best she might hope to become one of the Pasha's women, at worst to have a short career as a prostitute in the Bouz-Bir at Rabat, or in the filthy red-light quarters of Fez, Meknes, or Marrakech.

She was sitting dejectedly looking at the water, her eyes half closed, thinking perhaps of the same

thing. The moonlight shadowed the soft curves of her neck and cheeks, the small pointed nose, the firm chin, her full round breast. In spite of her physical maturity she did not look more than fifteen. Why had she done this for him, an alien stranger? How could he ever show his gratitude? Had they been brought together by chance or by some inexplicable design? Here they were anyway! He, an outcast five thousand miles from the home he would perhaps never see again,—she, a girl deserving of happiness, ripe for love, yet with her life forfeit on his account, more of an outcast even than himself.

“Poor kid!” he thought. “Might have been better if that old guy on the mule had got me!” He could not bear to feel that he was the cause of her dejection and of her future misery. If only she were not so pretty! “Poor kid! Poor little kid!” Her hand lay half open in the moonlight on the grass. He took it and drew her to him. She did not resist, but submitted to his caress. Then as he took her in his arms she turned her face to his and clasping his head in her hands kissed him with a fierceness he had never imagined possible.

The sun peeping over the wall of the Atlas roused them from their bed of flowers and by its light they saw that they had been sleeping within but a few feet of a well worn trail. At any moment they might be discovered by a chance passer-by. Obliterating their footprints as best they could, they clambered up the hillside to where a group of fig-trees offered

a more complete, if hardly less obvious, place of concealment and from which they could command the ravine. It was unlikely, unless they were being looked for, that they would be seen, and in any event with their two rifles they could offer a determined resistance.

They were now, Robert decided, in the deserted region back of the battle zone where the advanced columns of the *Groupe Mobile* had been operating. While they might encounter an actual armed force on its way to or from the scene of the fighting it was not probable that they would meet anybody but wandering marauders or possibly a small body of guerillas. If Taghzout lay in the direction indicated by Aisha, they were doubtless on the upper Oued Giugou and, to reach the fort, had only to follow the river.

During the next day they hid among the rocks behind the grove of figs, and while Robert slept the girl remained on guard. Nothing seemed to tire her, and she showed no effects either of their long trek or of her struggle in the cave. It was stifling hot and, had it not been for the shade of the trees, Robert would have suffered severely from the sun which beat against the parapet of the ravine turning the flinty slate into slabs of fire. The gray and yellow hillsides rose almost perpendicular from the white ribbon of the Giugou, radiating quivering lines of heat that steamed upward into the pale blue. No living thing came that way and they saw not so much as a goat,

buzzard, or horned viper. Aisha descended to the river and refilled her goat-skin. Once they heard the boom of a 65, and once the cliff echoed to the drumming of an airplane roaring on its unseen way across the Atlas. He twisted his neck trying to catch a fleeting glimpse of it, but it remained invisible and presently its pulse beats died away and stark silence once more fell upon them.

Aisha had shown no surprise over his tender of affection. Once her outburst of passion had subsided she had sunk back again into her usual matter-of-fact attitude of half protectress, half servant. So far as her facial expression was concerned the episode of the evening before might never have happened. She showed nothing,—not even much apprehension of their being followed, which Robert attributed to the improbability either that the other members of the tribe would find the cave, or if they did, would assume that she had fled in the direction of the enemy French. Their food supply was ample and, high above the footpath in the bottom of the ravine, Robert was able to enjoy the luxury of an occasional cigarette. Then the shadow of the opposite escarpment crept to the river bank, crawled upward toward them, driving the sunlight before it, and disappeared into the sky. Dark gathered in the ravine below. They ate again, and at the first stars continued on their way. That night they rested only once.

They were now following clearly marked paths, some of which were almost worthy to be called roads

and showed signs of recent use by both men and horses. Here and there they came upon deserted *kasbahs* and tiny villages to which they gave a wide berth, but where they neither saw the light of fires nor heard so much as the barking of a dog. While Robert could not recognize any of them, he knew that he had reached the district being covered by the *Groupe Mobile*. His own column, he felt sure, would have retired. No attempt would be made to rebuild the blockhouse until the ending of the Riff campaign should release enough troops to reduce the whole Tache de Tazâ to subjection. As he gazed at the gigantic mountain waves that rose tumultuously on every side, he was sceptical if it would ever be subdued.

He looked at Aisha striding along under her load, her limbs flexible as whalebone, resilient as Toledo steel, used to hardship, fatigue and famine, her spirit indomitable.—Nothing could subdue her or the sons of women like her except Death! Why should they be subdued? he asked himself. The answer was obvious. These Arabs and Berbers needed not so much to be subjected to a superior disciplinary force as to be enlightened by example as to pity, benevolence and compassion, of which they had none. They had loyalty of the tribal sort, fearless courage and fortitude under suffering, but they were cruel, revengeful, sensual and bloodthirsty, and they regarded women as animals without souls. Aisha would be exposed to no such danger in Europe or America as she would instantly face here when she left him.

A woman,—any woman of any age,—was common prey. Even motherhood was entitled to no respect. Assured of entry into Paradise so long as he acknowledged the supremacy of Allah and the leadership of Mohammed, kept the feast of Ramadan, washed his hands and feet and prayed five times a day, the Arab had no need to control his appetites. He was free to indulge his lust for women and for fighting. Robert became more and more concerned as to what would happen to this girl for whom he had so tender a feeling of gratitude and affection. Once they reached the lines, a possibility of which at last he could now reasonably entertain hope, he must perforce abandon her to her fate,—a fate the barest thought of which filled him with torment.

As they stumbled along the narrow path beneath the blackness of the overhanging hillsides, he considered the possibility of deserting from the Legion and making his escape with her to some Mediterranean port. Clearly such a thing was out of the question. It was chimerical to suppose that he could pass for a Berber. The country was alive with troops from Rabat to Oran, and even could he escape detection as a deserter, they had no future means of sustenance and his physical condition was desperate. No, she must fend for herself. He staggered on, a victim of a mental and physical depression that once more tempted him to believe that it would have been better all around if he had been blown to eternity along with his comrades in the attack.

Before dawn they had left the mountains behind

them and entered a broad valley surrounded by low, partially wooded hills. Once more they hid themselves in a hollow bank protected by bushes, and having eaten the remainder of their food slept with their loaded rifles by their sides. He awoke to find Aisha sitting with her elbows on her knees, her head on her hands. The sun was sinking. He half raised himself and put his arm about her.

"Aisha," he said, "poor little Aisha!" But she gave no sign of having heard him. His heart smote him. Could he leave her? Or allow her to leave him? She got up silently and disappeared among the thorn bushes. In face of the torment he now suffered at the thought of Aisha's predicament, he had ceased for the time being to think of Nancy.

They started upon the last lap of their journey with the first advent of the stars, abandoning the bundle of burnouses and taking with them only the rifles. The moon was not yet up and they made good time over the grass-covered plain. Before long they struck a deeply rutted *piste* showing the recent passage of artillery, and after following it for awhile reached the summit of an elevation from which at a great distance they could see the glow of lights.

"Taghzout," she said, pointing.

They walked on in silence until the lights separated themselves and became a row of yellow points. The night was black about them but overhead in the zenith an impalpable luminosity showed that dawn was hiding just below the edge of the world. The

time had come when she must leave him. He wondered what she would do about it. He really wasn't responsible for her—and yet, in a way, he was! Perhaps, in some Berber fashion, she now regarded him as hers forever. In a moment they would be in contact with the sentries. Would she expect to enter the lines with him and join the sutlers and other followers of the camp? How was he to explain to her that she couldn't? That a canteen of the Légion Etrangère was no place for a lovely unprotected young Berber woman? How would she take it? Would she get out that little dagger of hers again? Whatever she did, it was a mess!

The same general trend of thought was evidently in Aisha's own mind, for at the end of another couple of hundred yards, she stopped, took his rifle from him, and concealed it with hers behind a hillock. They must not approach the outposts with arms in their hands—or while it was still dark. Already the Atlas was fretted with gold. A greenish radiance shimmered over the *bled* upon which dim, illusive shadows were cast by the rocks and bushes. Suddenly the whole universe paled and the constellations shrank back into space as red and yellow tentacles of light reached after them from behind the mountains.

They lingered by the hillock until the first rays of the sun shot across the plain. The walls of Taghzout were now plainly visible less than a mile away. Doubtless they were already under observation. At

any instant they might be stopped by the abrupt challenge of the vidette. Before them the *bled* flowed softly westward, a lustrous green carpet patched with arabesques of desert flowers. His path lay across it, the path to safety, to comparative comfort, and—once his term of service should be over—to an as yet undetermined but possibly happy future. Eastward, whence they had come, frowned the harsh abutments of the jagged wall that marked the boundary between progress and barbarism. Behind it were war, starvation, cruelty, lust, slavery, disease and death. Could he send her back there? A hundred yards ahead stood a motionless sentry, rifle at hip. The moment had come. Anything would be better than to let her go back to certain death at the hands of her people. He'd do the best he could for her—something!—Then her hand clutched his sleeve and halted him. Pointing first at Taghzout and then at herself she shook her head.

"O, come on, Aisha!" he urged, feeling like a dog at his conscious half-heartedness. She muttered something in Arabic and lifted the hem of his burnoose to her lips. Then bending, she kissed his shoulder and rested her forehead against it. It was more than he could stand.

"Aisha!" he groaned, taking her in his arms and kissing her on the forehead. "Poor kid!—You mustn't go back!—I'll fix you up somehow!"

She stood there for several seconds making neither sound nor movement, then turned and walked slowly

back across the *bled* toward the mountains. He had not sent her. She had gone of herself! Did she know what she was doing? He must not let her go back like that! But could he stop her? He started to call after her, but something tied his tongue. After all it would solve a lot of difficulties! She was an alien, of another race, whose language he could not speak!—But what difference did that make? She'd saved his life, hadn't she? He must persuade her to come with him. —Should he?

Already her figure was dwindling. If he was going to fetch her back he must act quickly. There! She had stopped. She was bending to pick up the rifles!

"Aisha!" he shouted as loudly as he could. "Aisha! —Aisha!——"

She paid no attention to him.

"Aisha!" he repeated. "Come back!—I don't want you to go!"

But she did not turn. With the rifles over her shoulder she resumed her way toward the hills. Soon she was only a white dot swimming upon the distant *bled*, which presently melted into nothing.

VIII

ROBERT was welcomed at Taghzout as the sole survivor of the relief party. Until he had reappeared no details of the engagement had been known, since the plateau had remained in the hands of the Berbers and the airplane observers had reported that only a blackened heap of rubble remained upon the site of the fort. He was, accordingly, ordered forthwith to Rabat, where he made a personal report to the "Etat Major" and was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Then after ten days' leave in Fez he was assigned to a "*compagnie montée*" and ordered back to the Tache de Taza.

Abd-El-Krim's offensive had been for the moment blocked, General Lyautey had been recalled, and General Petain had been sent out to Africa with fresh forces of 200,000 men. The tide was on the turn. It was clear that a purely defensive policy was no longer possible, and Paris and Madrid, realizing that Abd-El-Krim might prove too strong for either of them individually, arranged for joint military action in Morocco.

Sidi Raho, in spite of sporadic successes here and there, such as at Tichkoukt, was being gradually driven back farther and farther into the mountains. His inability to unite with Abd-El-Krim in a successful attack upon Fez or a decisive defeat of the

French elsewhere had been a great disappointment. Age was beginning to tell upon him as well as his twelve years of consecutive fighting. It was difficult for him to exert any systematic military control over his forces, since neither he nor Abd-El-Krim was able to keep their tribesmen fighting for more than two or three weeks at a stretch, after which they all wanted to go back to their tents and take a rest.

Moreover there was actual disaffection. Several powerful caïds and cheikhs, once their dream of sacking Fez had faded, seeing the tremendous military preparations being made by the French for the spring campaign, concluded that there was nothing to be gained by fighting "the strangers with the hats" any longer. As a *djihad* the contest did not particularly appeal to them. Winter was coming on and it would be much pleasanter to sit comfortably in one's *kasbah* while the storm shrieked outside than to lie exposed to the icy wind and snow on the ridges of the Atlas. Among these wise ones had been Saïd ou Mohand, and when "Saint" Sidi Raho learned of his apostasy he rent his clothes and called down the curse of Allah upon his erstwhile friend and ally.

But Saïd ou Mohand had decided that being blown up was too much of a good thing. He was used to rough and tumble fighting, and was quite ready to chance either knife-thrust or bullet, but these wholesale explosions were not in his line. Several of his bones had been broken, most of his followers had

been killed, and Aisha had disappeared. The result of his acceptance of Sidi Raho's invitation to join in the capture of Fez had been distinctly unsatisfactory. It was true that he liked fighting, but he liked to fight and then lie off a bit. Moreover, word had reached him that the French, as soon as they had disposed of Abd-El-Krim, were going to concentrate their forces on the Tache de Taza and exterminate all who opposed them. He did not like the sound of it.

He also began to have doubts about Sidi Raho being a "saint." If a "saint" could not prevail against the "strangers with the hats," how could a mere ordinary man? Perhaps Sidi Raho was not a "saint" after all! He was filled with awe at the big guns used by the French, and at the huge metal birds which they had trained to fly overhead and drop red-hot dung upon their enemies, as well as at the strange iron houses that crawled along of themselves and carried squads of fighting-men inside. So, when once more able to travel, he had returned to the Tseghouchene and after giving the matter his most careful consideration had sent his nephew Mes-saoud Ali Ben Hammon down to Taghzout with a flag of truce and made his submission.

"It is written that I may not oppose the Roumis," he said. "It is the will of God that I make peace. Praise be to Allah!"

So the French had made him a caïd and promised to leave him alone so long as he and his tribe would

quit fighting, and as a result of his submission they had been able to advance their lines beyond Boulmane as far as Enjil, some fifty miles on farther south into the mountains. So it was that the Aït Mohand became a part of the Blad-el-Makhzen, or "of the Sultan's government."

But in spite of Saïd ou Mohand's "submission" there were several of his neighbors and many of his own tribesmen who did not like the idea of acknowledging Sultan Moulay Yusef as their master, and these continued to carry on their guerilla warfare against the French even within the territory of the Tseghouchene, while to the eastward, north of the Forêt des Aït Bassa, the fighting went on more fiercely than ever before. Once assured that they could confine Abd-El-Krim to the Riff, the French turned their attention in earnest to Sidi Raho and the Tache de Taza, despatching column after column into the mountains until they had forty battalions surrounding the district, in addition to artillery, innumerable squadrons of Spahis, and "*les trains équipages*" or supply corps.

The *Compagnie Montée* was a unit of picked men called out for special emergencies, half of them mounted on mules and half of them on foot, who thought nothing of covering fifty kilometres a day in the midst of mountains ten thousand feet high in pursuit of the bands of natives, or "Djouch," that hung upon the flanks of the columns and sought to break up their communications. When the legion-

aries were not relieving and reorganizing outposts, or convoying supplies, they were engaged in dynamiting rocks and breaking stones, building roads to bring up the guns, digging holes for lime-kilns, putting up barbed wire, running telephone lines, and erecting walls and fortifications. All of it was work of the hardest sort, and when engaged in actual fighting the company frequently went forty-eight hours without food. Yet during all this time Robert was within less than a hundred kilometres of Fez and could have reached it by airplane in less than an hour.

IX

"I've half a mind to spend the winter in Morocco," said Mrs. Vernon to her daughter as they sat on the veranda of the Grand Hotel at Algeciras one day that autumn. "They tell me everything is made so easy by the '*Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*.' You have your own motor and chauffeur, and rooms are reserved for you in advance at all the best hotels. Don't you think it might be nice?"

Nancy looked across the Straits to where high in the southern sky the Atlas hung like a thunder cloud.

"But they're still fighting in Morocco, aren't they? How about the war in the Riff and Abd-El-Krim?"

"I inquired about that," replied her mother. "It's quite all right. The war zone is practically confined to the mountains right over there. We wouldn't be anywhere near it. It doesn't amount to much anyhow."

Nancy could not help glancing at the row of convalescent Spanish officers on the veranda below.

"I thought it was quite a war," she ventured. "Major Lopez said last night at dinner it might last several years."

"We wouldn't be going to that part of the country at all," answered Mrs. Vernon. "I looked it all up on the map with one of the 'Transat' agents. We would go first by boat to Casablanca and then take

a motor to Marrakech, which is two hundred miles south of where the trouble is. He says it's perfectly wonderful and, if we liked it, we could stay there through cold weather. I've no doubt it would be simply full of attractive young officers."

"I'm not interested in officers!" retorted Nancy. "I don't need their society, but I wouldn't object to seeing Marrakech."

"I do believe you're still thinking about Robert Shafter!"

Nancy made no reply. It was quite true that she was still thinking about Robert and that the longer the time elapsed the more she thought of him. She would have given anything to undo and live over again that last unfortunate evening. How could she have denied that she had considered herself engaged to him? If only he had not gone off without giving her a chance to retract what she had not really meant! How was she to know that he would do anything like that? Must she go on paying for a few careless words as long as she lived?

"If I was as pretty a girl as you are," went on Mrs. Vernon, "I'd begin looking around for some one else. There's just as good fish in the sea— Why, Nancy! What's the matter?"

Nancy's chair was empty.

The polite young representative of the "Transat" who assisted in the debarkation of the steamer's passengers at Casablanca noted with approval the blue-

eyed young American girl and her youthful-looking mamma, who followed the swarthy porters carrying their luggage down the companionway to the barge crowded with blue-uniformed French staff officers in red caps and gold lace, fat bearded Jews in black skull caps, and prosperous Moorish merchants in snowy burnouses and pointed yellow slippers. Girls like her were all too few among the hybrid population of the "boom" port into which his native country was pouring millions, if not billions, of francs for new jetties and breakwaters, administration buildings, aviation fields and boulevards. He wished that their acquaintance had not ended at the door of the shining Renault landaulette into which he bowed them at the conclusion of the perfunctory customs inspection.

As she motored along the wide avenues lined with banks, cinemas, and restaurants, Nancy—in spite of the modernized Moorish architecture of white trimmed with blue, partly inlaid with tiles—could easily have fancied herself in Los Angeles or any western American city. Even the smiling Arab servants in fez and caftan at the "Transat" where she passed the night might have belonged to the "Moorish Room" of any smart cosmopolitan hotel. But when she and her mother whirled away to the south next morning, they had hardly left the white roofs of Casablanca five kilometres behind them before they found themselves transported abruptly into Bible times.

The arid *bled* stretched to the horizon like a rough golf course, broken only by an occasional dried water-course, a solitary palmetto, the white dome of a koubba, or the scattered tents of a nomad encampment. Strings of donkeys with bulging saddle-bags or caravans of camels under swaying loads, their grotesque heads raised like those of prehistoric creatures, half snake, half bird, stalked in solemn frieze against the skyline. Here and there in a blood-red field an Arab was turning up the earth behind a donkey and a camel, hitched together in a ludicrous partnership, dragging the traditional crooked stick used instead of a plough since the time of Adam, while beside the road ragged patriarchs from Isaiah and Malachi plodded majestically staff in hand or jogged unconcernedly along upon the rumps of tiny jackasses.

A stream of traffic followed the macadam highway,—veiled women with slanting eyes, half-clad children carrying earthen vessels upon their shaven heads, stalwart negroes in scanty garments improvised from old sacking and bits of string, hooded riders on mules or horses, sitting singly or a-pillion, and lean-limbed Arabs in soiled tunics, their walking sticks braced behind their shoulders,—grave wayfarers all, intent upon their age-old business whatever it might be,—the selling of a jar of oil, a sack of wheat, a bundle of firewood, a basket of henna leaves, a pilgrimage to some local marabout, or merely a shift of camp from one desert well to another. The only evidence of the twentieth cen-

tury was the thin line of telegraph poles that paralleled the road and the occasional motor busses which, their roofs crowded with ecstatic *indigènes* and their baggage-covers wildly flapping, roared by in a whirlwind of dust. These swaying Arabs, with their bellying burnouses, the chauffeur told them, were known as "Americans," having learned "roof-riding" from seeing the dough-boys sitting a-top the camions in the war.

Speeding southward in the hard-biting sunlight the traffic became more sparse and they traversed mile upon mile of parched emptiness that held for Nancy something of the enchantment of the sea. And just as the horizon opened before her, so in a peculiar way did her mental vision. The fortuitous aspects of existence assumed their true values, and life itself took on a new dignity.

They paused at the historic seaport of Mazagan long enough to inspect the Portuguese ramparts and ancient cistern, once the guardroom of the mediæval fortress and now a dim vaulted grotto, whose arches are reflected in an emerald pool shot with blue half-lights; lunched at an open air Arab café above fantastic red rocks overhanging a mile-long beach, and an hour later were on their way again. Now the country became more hilly, rising first through the fertile vineyards and grain fields of the Doukkala, to the calcined, treeless slopes of the jinn-haunted Djebilets that guard the red plain of Haouz in which lies Marrakech.

Entranced with the mysterious novelty of the new

world about her, Nancy had hardly spoken to her mother all day, but now as they topped the last ridge of glistening slag and yellow rock she clutched her by the hand.

"Look, mother!— Look!" she exclaimed awe-struck.

Across the plain, sheer against the sky rose the gigantic snow-crested barrier of the Grand Atlas, its lower slopes slashed with purple valleys, its western turrets tinged with every color of the sunset. Below them floated like a mirage an oasis of feathery palms from which a solitary jewelled tower raised itself in a mist of bronze.

"*C'est la Marrakech, Madame!*" said the chauffeur. "Beyond is—the Sahara—the Soudan—the unknown!" he added as if to himself.

X

THE Mamounia Hotel at Marrakech is a bit of modern Paris transplanted into the Old Testament. Here you may sit in palm-shaded gardens sipping cool drinks and dreaming away the hours, or loitering at its gateway, watch Abraham, Isaac and Rebecca, the Pharisee and the Saducee, the Samaritan, Lazarus and Dives, and many a Holy Family passing down the Avenue de Gueliz to the Bab Doukkala and the red walls of the city. From its portals you have but to snap your fingers to summon a fiacre drawn by plunging Arab chargers which, provided you be not over particular about the fleas that may leap upon you from its ancient cushions, will whisk you backward through the intervening centuries to a world unchanged since the days of Haroun-Al-Rashid.

Here are the sunshine and color of Egypt within arm's length of barbarism; here the tourist reclining amid the Oriental upholstery and decorations of the Mamounia can imagine himself a Sultan or at least a Pasha; and here unless he fights valiantly against its weird and insidious spell he will find himself lingering for weeks, long after his comrades of "Circuit A" have motored on in the "Transat's" charabancs to Fez or to Algiers, still forcing his way through the struggling mobs of the sun-flecked souks;

watching the eager hordes of tribesmen gathered about the story-tellers, the musicians, the snake-charmers, the sorcerers, and the dancers in the Place Djemaa El Fna; listening to the warble of birds at evening among the lush groves of orange, pepper and eucalyptus which border the silent blue basins of the Aguedal; or waiting for the muezzin to hoist the white flag upon the rose-tinted tower of the Koutoubia as a sign to his brethren upon the other minarets that it is time to summon the faithful to their prayers.

The spacious open market-place known as The Fna has been for a thousand years the playground of Morocco. Here caravans of camels and donkeys from the Sous, the Hoggar and Senegal after weeks of travel file slowly along the low arches of the cafés, past the purple, orange and scarlet pyramids of the fruit venders, to sink roaring and squealing to the ground in the caravansary behind the *fondaks*. Here congregate nomads from the *bled*, wild hill-men in their sheep skins, veiled "blue" Tuaregs, haughty unveiled Berber women, coal-black negroes from the Soudan, pursy merchants from the souks, slave-girls and eunuchs, swarms of tubercular children semi-nude and scrofulous, caïds on muleback with their attendants, olive growers, tanners, silk weavers, cattle dealers, wool merchants, blind beggars led by whining little boys, servile Jews, Moors, Beduins, Berbers, Senegalese, men of every shade,—in every kind of fluttering costume, scanty to nakedness, or

swathed in burnouses of white, brown-striped, or black adorned with scarlet medallions,—many of whom have tramped for weeks or even months across the desert from beyond the Atlas. They have brought nothing with them except the rags and fleas upon their backs and, after feasting their eyes for a week or two upon the wonders of The Fna, sleeping meanwhile in doorways, ditches, or in the open market-place, will return empty but satisfied whence they have come.

Here squat solemnly upon the ground the letter-writers with their ink horns and brushes, the lawyers with their scrolls, the doctors with their disgusting pharmacopœia of tin cans, chicken-wings and refuse; here in an enthralled circle strides back and forth an aged story-teller, wand in hand, spinning a tale that never ends; there a snake-charmer or fire-eater invites a supposedly poisonous bite, swallows a blazing thorn, or places his lips to the blistering nozzle of a boiling tea-kettle; beyond, an orchestra of little children fiddles and whangs away under the leadership of their owner who has bought and trained them and will sell them complete into a life of musical servitude for three thousand dollars; here at five o'clock the Chleuh boys, painted and bedizened like little prostitutes, with tufted, shaven heads and tiny cymbals on thumb and forefinger, dance to their own shrill falsetto and cast coquettish glances at the more prosperous looking males among the audience; there stand the booths of the hasheesh and tobacco mer-

chants, the venders of dates, oranges, sugar-cones, and hot mint tea; while on the open space hard by, fried sweet-potatoes, slices of skewered liver, roasted corn, and thick chicken or mutton broth may be bought for a few centimes.

Through the motley of odoriferous sightseers, bare-legged water-carriers squirm their way, with dripping goat-skin bottles slung beneath their shoulders, clashing their brass bowls like instruments of percussion; and candy-men bear chunks of taffy, as big as bee-hives, on the end of sticks just above the fly-blown heads of the crowd, "ready to eat." Near by a row of barbers chat and shave while "letting" the blood of their customers through small pipes attached just below the ears and leading into basins at each side,—a gory business to which nobody, not even the adjacent diners, seems to object. Every man goes about his affairs of whatever nature without regard to privacy.

There is no end to the singing, the recitative, the dancing. It is a forty-ringed circus, bizarre, colorful, grotesque, barbaric and Oriental,—a continuous, free performance. There is no amateur, not even an imitative child of tender years, who cannot find some idler to do him reverence. The hee-haw of the donkeys, the protestations of the camels, mingle with the thud of the tom-toms, the squeal of the pipes, the chanting of the negroes and the shrilling of the Chleuh boys. From the mouth of the souks are wafted the fumes of burning charcoal and hot

bread, the smell of ammonia, of decaying fruit and of damp wool, the acrid reek from the dyer's steaming vats, the harsh odor of camels and of donkeys, mingled with that of sweaty harness and of unwashed human beings,—of spices and of rose leaves.

The morning after their arrival the Vernons, under the escort of a slender, almond-eyed Arab named Mohommed Abu Mandril, hastened to the square. The vivid colors, the strange smells, the thud of the drums and the shouts of the performers, the brilliance of the sunlight, filled Nancy with a singular excitement, that was not without an element of fear. Gradually she mustered enough courage to mingle with the spectators on the outskirts of the crowds and to watch what was going on inside.

Gratified to find that their presence seemed to excite no hostility, the Vernons sauntered from group to group until they found themselves upon the outer edge of the compact circle gathered around a huge negro, clad only in a tattered loin-cloth, who seemed to be conducting a combination revival meeting and minstrel show. Squatting beside him two dishevelled, but industrious, musicians kept up a fierce and monotonous accompaniment, one upon a reed-pipe, the other upon a drum shaped like a dry-gallon measure, which he balanced skilfully in the air while pounding it with the heel of his palm in a marvel of syncopation. Nancy was fascinated by the leapings and howlings of the chief performer, the wool of whose scalp was twisted into spikes entwined with parti-colored

silks and whose cheeks were slashed with streaks of white paint.

"Allah!—Allah!" yelled the negro, capering about the circle, rolling up his eyes, and raising his arms to Heaven. "Allah!—Allah!"

"What is he, Mandril?" asked Nancy of their guide.

"She holy man from Soudan down there. She dance—and make folks laugh very much," explained the serious-minded Mandril.

Nancy threw a franc into the brass bowl beside the flute player and instantly the dancer seized and tossed it high in the air.

"*Un franco! Un franco!*" he shouted triumphantly, in an evident attempt to encourage other onlookers to do likewise. "Allah!—Allah!"

The response being limited, he returned to the centre of the ring and commenced a series of pantomimic contortions and grimaces, wrinkling his cheeks and twisting his lips. This met with more favor and a light shower of microscopic coins rewarded his effort.

"I do believe that man is making signs to us!" declared Mrs. Vernon. "He certainly keeps looking at us in the queerest way! I'm not going to stay here a moment longer! Suppose he should attract the attention of all these natives to us? You don't know what they might do!"

Nancy was half inclined to agree with her. The negro certainly appeared to keep his eyes fixed in

their direction, and the impression was intensified when, abandoning his grimaces, he unexpectedly began dancing an old-fashioned double shuffle to a whistled accompaniment of "I wish I were in Dixie!" Then facing directly toward Nancy he gave her a mock military salute. Before she could recover from her surprise he was off again, prancing and cavorting in an exaggerated cake-walk, and raising his perpetual cry to Allah.

"I wish we had spoken to that man!" she remarked to her mother on their way back to the hotel.

"Who—that negro? I thought he was a horrid-looking creature."

"I wonder where he learned 'Dixie'!"

Mrs. Vernon pondered.

"Oh, I guess he just picked it up somewhere," she hazarded.

"She holy man from the Soudan," elucidated Mandril authoritatively. "She *fou—maboul—*" he tapped his forehead.

But the encounter had left Nancy with a haunting uneasiness which persisted long after she had returned to the protected groves of the Mamounia. How could the mad black have learned "Dixie" in the Soudan? Why had he kept looking at them? Could he have been trying to hypnotize her? Was it part of his madness or did he want something? As she sat after lunch trying to read in the security of the palm-shaded private piazza upon which her bedroom opened, it gave her an eerie feeling to hear

from just beyond the wall that continuous frenzied howling and thudding of drums. What were those fanatics doing down there in the Djemaa El Fna—"The Place of the Dead"? Were they hatching some plot against the Europeans? Or casting some voodoo spell? And why "of the Dead"? Was The Fna not rather the very heart of a great, pulsating, native organism whose veins reached far out across the yellow deserts, to Timbuktu, to the Hoggar, to Senegal and the midday darkness of the jungle?

Even in the slanting sunlight of the late golden afternoon, through which they drove to the Bahia and visited the Tombs of the Saadians, she felt that same vague sense of apprehension. It was utter foolishness, she told herself. What was there to be afraid of in a palace hotel like the Mamounia, dining to the latest jazz, safeguarded on every side by the representatives of the "*Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*" in a city completely under French control and the headquarters of a regiment of the Legion? But all the time that they were talking and drinking their coffee on the purple and scarlet cushions, amid the polyglot chatter of their fellow tourists in the crowded lounge, she dreaded the moment when she must go to bed.

She had felt that same dread the night before when she lay unable to sleep for the uncanny sounds that reached her ears above the trill of the frogs in the ditches and the rattle of the palm-fronds. Through the slats of the Venetian blind separating

her bed from the piazza floated the scent of citron, jasmine, orange-blossoms and roses; yet along with the sweet odors came from the distant square the throb of the drums interspersed with faint shouts and muffled yells, carrying with them a suggestion of murky forests peopled by hairy beasts in the likeness of men, of sluggish, oily streams, of sorcery and the macabe rites of animal worship, of cruel-faced men grouped about camel-dung fires, of sand storm and sirocco, of blood lust, idolatry and fanaticism, of the menace and mystery of Africa, the inscrutable.

Mrs. Vernon had discovered an old school-friend in a Mrs. Dunham from Boston and was recounting the day's experiences for the latter's benefit.

"I wouldn't have missed Marrakech for a million dollars!" she declared excitedly. "Did you see those caravans of camels coming into the square? And those big brown men in their what-do-you-call 'ems? It was just like those colored prints in 'Stories from the Bible' I used to read when I was a girl! And those Arabs sitting cross-legged, like idols, in their little cubby-holes in the bazaars! They had the most wonderful embroidered slippers and jewelry
——"

"I got a perfectly beautiful 'Hand of Fatma' for only two hundred francs——" interrupted Mrs. Dunham. "But those natives do give me the tee-wees, somehow!"

Sky-blue uniforms of the line, looped with decora-

tions, mingled with the white ducks of the Legion, where officers on leave from Fez and Taza gathered about the tabarets or reclined upon the divans along the wall. Bronzed Englishmen in full evening-dress jogged elbows with homespun tourists from the Middle West,—gay Parisiennes, fresh from the race-tracks of Deauville and Auteuil, the *dernier cri* of exotic fashion, with practical New England ladies in square-toed shoes and crash skirts “guaranteed not to show the dust.” Cross-legged upon an enormous cushion, fatter even than he was himself, sat a gorgeous *caïd*, in snowy crimson-banded turban, canary-colored caftan and striped djellaba, taking coffee with a representative of the Resident-General at Rabat.

Nancy walked the length of the garden wing of the hotel, bade her mother good-night, and crossed the hall to her own bedroom. As she opened the door she noticed that one of the French windows which she had closed before dressing for dinner was ajar. She went to it and looked out. The night was sapphire clear save for the light mist that always hangs above the moist gardens of an oasis.

From beyond the flower-covered mud wall rose the wild discordance of The Fna,—the howls, the insistent thumping of a native drum, like that of the tom-tom in “The Emperor Jones.” It made her nerves jump in just the same way, giving her the same uncanny sense of unreasoning terror. Did those people from the square, she wondered, ever climb over the

wall into the garden? How did she know but that some Arab thief was even then lurking in the shadows, only waiting until she should go to bed to crawl into the room? Nervously she peered down the moon-dappled vistas of palm trunks. Was that not a shrouded figure standing motionless in the shadow just behind the roses? Nonsense! There could be nothing to fear with a dozen people sitting within a hundred feet upon the neighboring piazzas! Nevertheless she disliked the thought of turning on the light and it required a moral effort for her to do so.

She was about to close the window when a small object fluttered like a moth into the room and dropped at her feet. Had it not fallen out of the night so gently she would have screamed with fright; as it was, her common sense assured her that no one who meant her harm would warn her of it. Her heart echoed the throb of the tom-toms as she bent and picked up a scrap of paper wrapped about a twig. It bore a pencilled scrawl:

"Dere Miss Dont be scart For gods sake help an american citizen You shore ar my ony hope to git back home if you will help a pore man who needs yore help put out the lite and let me speak to you on the pyazzer for a minit
AL JOLSON."

The reaction almost made her titter. "Al Jolson!" He was a blackface comedian at home, was he not? How could he be out there five thousand miles away?

Was it an attempted joke on the part of some youthful fellow tourist? It didn't sound like a joke! Curiosity neutralized any misgivings as to her discretion.

Throwing a wrap over her shoulders she stepped out upon the piazza into the veiled light of the winter moon. One of the rose bushes dislodged itself from the others and began crawling toward her into the shadow of the balustrade. Next moment she was looking into the hooded features of the negro she had seen that morning in The Fna,—a face no longer paint-smearred, hideous or grinning—an honest face like that of "Nigger Jim," "Hooch" Googins's helper, at the railroad station back home in Ohio.

"Fo' Gawd's sake, Missy, save me," he begged hoarsely. "I'm an American citizen, an' I've had great trouble. O, terrible trouble! I been near killed a coupla hundred times. I got ter git out o' here, I sho' have. This here North Africa ain't no place for me. I wanna git home. Won' you help me, Missy? I ain't had a decent meal for months. I've walked thousands of miles in my bare feet. I've had no one to talk to but Arabs. You're the fust American I've seen since I was blown up——"

Nancy no longer felt any terror of the black man.

"Where were you blown up? How did you get out here?"

"I was in the *Légion Etrangère*, Missy. Way off in the mountains south of Taza. I enlisted three years ago. It's a terrible life!—Sump'n fierce! My battal-

ion was sent to relieve an outpost, but just as we got there they blew up the fort an' everybody was killed but me,—Arabs and all! I made up my mind I'd rather git killed some other way, where I had more of a chance. So I didn't go back."

"You deserted?"

"Yes, Missy,—if being blown up is desertion. I jes' didn't go back! All the same, if they ketch me, they'll send me to the Penal Battalion. That's wuss'n death! If I kin only make Mogador or Casablanca, I'll git to America somehow. Fifty bucks would do it.—For Gawd's sake, Missy!"

He clutched the rail of the balustrade whimpering, half hysterical,—a poor frightened nigger! His appeal aroused an atavistic echo in Nancy's heart. Back in Rome, Ohio, her grandfather had helped operate the "underground railroad" for runaway slaves. The bloodhounds were upon the track of the terror-stricken man now seeking her protection no less than then. For nearly an hour, to the accompaniment of the yowling beyond the palm trees, Nancy listened to the strangest story she had ever heard.

He had been, he told her, a soft-shoe dancer and vaudeville comedian who, having kicked around Paris for a year or so after the War, had joined the Foreign Legion for want of anything better to do. He had been greatly disappointed in his experience but, unfortunately, once in, there had been no way to get out until the end of his five years. He had stuck it as best he could until the campaign in

the Tache de Taza. Then had come the attempt to relieve the garrison at Tichkoukt, for which he had volunteered, and the terrible charge across the trenches where he had found himself cut off from his companions by a mob of yelling Berbers, and had taken shelter among the rocks under the edge of the plateau. This had probably saved him when everybody else had been blown to pieces. At daylight he had found himself surrounded by mangled corpses. It was then that he had made up his mind to "go pump." Better death by starvation than to be blown up that way again. He was "fed up" with it. They would think him dead like the others. If he could get to the west coast he could probably manage to escape to America. His color might prove his salvation. For once he thanked God that he was a nigger.

Filching the clothes of a dead Berber, he put them on and, spying a white mule wandering in the ravine, caught and mounted it. To the north the French lines barred his way to the Mediterranean. He was already half way through the Atlas, and once he reached the desert to the south he might eventually work his way to Agadir. It was the crazy plan of a man half crazed from fright.

"I could speak a little Arabic an' I reckoned once I got among the nomads I could pretend I was from Senegal or Timbuktu, an' maybe join a caravan trabblin' to the coast. But first I had to git through the mountains, an' I didn't have no maps nor

nothin'! So I kep' follerin' up the valleys, gettin' higher 'n higher, until I felt like a fly on a steeple. It was so cold I nearly froze to death, and I got shot at half a dozen times, an' once the mule fell off a cliff, but I managed to git through, I doan' know jes' how, an' I come out finally in a place all yaller rocks and gray sand in the no'thern part o' the Tafielt country. I didn' wanna see no more mountains, an' although my mule was kinder sick an' awful mean, I kep' goin' down and down, until I struck the desert they call the Bin-El-Kór-Bin.

"It was a warm place, Missy! I'd been freezin' befo', but now I was half roasted and dyin' o' thirst, an' to make it worse my mule up and had a fit one day and jes' nacherly passed out. So there I was, all by myself, with hardly anythin' to eat and the sun beatin' down on my head and eyes, and I reckon it made me kind o' nutty. I knew that if I didn' git the *mezrag*, or protection, of some chief I'd probably be cut up in pieces on sight. But I kep' on, and bimeby I struck a little oasis with some slimy green water in a hole in the rocks, an' a few palm trees, and an old *koubba*—where a holy man had lived once.

"The *koubba* was empty an' I laid myself down in it and went sound to sleep. I must 'a' slep' a coupla days. Fust thing I knew I heard a camel a-roarin', an' I peeked out, an' there was a big caravan of men, women and children, camels, mules, goats and dogs, jes' about to make camp. I tell you, Missy, I sho' was scart! But I staid still and waited, and

bimeby toward sundown they all began to wash themselves in the sand and make their prayers, and that gave me an idea.

"I decided 'cause I was in the holy man's house I might as well be a holy man myself,—a deaf and dumb holy man, so's I wouldn' have to explain where I come from, nor nuthin'. So, while they were prayin', I slipped out an' sat down cross-legged in front of the door, an' bimeby when they had done, one of the men saw me, and looked kind o' surprised, an' come over an' said something. I give him a haughty look and made the high sign by raisin' both hands in the air. This seemed to puzzle him and he brought over a bunch of the others. They stood 'round in a circle and, whenever they asked me anything, I pointed to my ears and mouth and shook my head. I reckon they thought I was some new kind of hermit-crab *marabout* who'd jes' slipped into the old *marabout's* shell.

"Anyhow, it went big, an' they brought me all kinds of things to eat, while I jes' sat there an' looked holy. Once or twice a day I'd go out a little way on the sand and spin around a few times with my arms in the air, and they thought it was hot stuff. Yes, ma-am, as a holy man I was a knock-out, an' I guess I'd have been there yet, if the well hadn't fetched up dry an' they'd had to move,—takin' me wif 'em, of course. They put me on one of their camels and gave me two boys, who wanted to learn how to be *marabouts*, to wait on me. It was easy

money! There was about a hundred and fifty of us, and we sure made a big parade,—‘Holy Man Jolson’ riding on ahead. They didn’ seem to be goin’ nowhere in particular, just trabblin’ from water hole to water hole, and when I thought the *marabout* business was gittin’ stale, I dug out a few vaudeville tricks I’d picked up on the Keith-Albee circuit and knocked ’em cold. If I’d only had a pack of squéezers, I could ha’ been King of the Sahara! It was a cinch. Every time I took a chicken out of the cheikh’s ear they stuffed me with spring lamb and *kous-kous*. But when they asked me to make a well full o’ water out’n a pile o’ larva I jes’ looked vacant and pretended not to understand.”

In the way, “Al” said, they travelled slowly south through the country of the Aït Ounir and the Aït Atta for a week or two, until one night a band of hostile Beduins swooped down upon them out of the darkness without warning, shooting and lancing the men as they crawled out of their tents, and cuttin’ the throats of the women and children, so that none was left alive,—none but “Holy Man Jolson,” “the safe-guarded of Allah,” who managed to escape in the *mêlée* and hide in a *wadi*, until the Arabs on their fast running Meharis had vanished into the south, leaving the camp a shambles behind them. He was alone in the tawny wastes of the Sahara, with no idea of his whereabouts, except that west of him must lie the table-lands of the Djebel Zeroual, where there was water, if he could live to get there. He

found a half-filled, goat-skin water bottle, and some bread which had been overlooked by the bandits, and set out guided at night by the Great Bear and hiding by day. For eleven nights he climbed up and down the gray dunes that rose, ridge upon ridge, before him. At sunrise on the twelfth he drank his last drop of water. It looked as if Allah had changed his mind about him.

"I reckon I got kinder light-headed," he said, "'cause I doan' remember nothin' mo' 'cep' staggerin' 'round in circles, an' seein' lakes and palm trees and strings of camels walkin' in the sky, until I found myself tied to a stake in the centre of a mud village, surrounded by a big crowd of half-naked men and children. I could hear part of 'em arguing in favor of buryin' me up to the neck and cuttin' my eyelids off, while the rest was for tyin' me to a sick camel and turnin' me loose in the desert."

In the end they had taken him before the local *caïd* who had seemed highly sceptical about his explanation of how he had got there. "Al" had tried his old holy man stunt without effect. It appeared that the locality was already supplied with a first-class *marabout*, who discouraged competition. In desperation "Al" had done a few of his tricks, and these had so pleased the *caïd* that he had announced an intention of keeping him as a slave. This had aroused the jealousy of the *marabout* who had made it clear that there was not room for both of them on the same oasis. One night at the point of a dagger he had

compelled "Al" to mount a camel and start forth across the desert. By daybreak he was hopelessly lost. The camel died and "Al" had to take to his legs again. After wandering three days without food or water he had fallen in with a band of nomads going north to Mengoub.

By that time he had learned when to be a holy man, when to be a sorcerer, and when to be a simple pilgrim from Timbuktu, who had taken a vow of silence, and after leaving the Nomads he had managed to reach first Amzrou, then Sefala, and finally Taourirt, which is just south of the Telouet Pass in the territory of El Glaoui. He had come more than three quarters of the way from Fez to Agadir by way of the Sahara, but he had no means of covering the other one hundred and fifty kilometres to the coast. Taourirt was on the direct route north from the Sahara and every day camel caravans and parties on foot passed through it on their way to Marrakech. He knew enough Arabic to pass for a Soudanese and had decided that if he was going to be a holy man he had better be a real one.

He learned that many negroes belonged to the Dghoughias, a fanatical sect of the Aïssaouas, whose holy city is Moulay Idriss. Sidi Ali Ben Hamdouch, a famous *marabout*, once living thereabouts, had had a faithful slave named Ahmed Ed Dghoughi who had killed himself in despair on the death of his master. Every year there was a pilgrimage to Moulay Idriss and an elaborate anniversary ceremony when

the negro followers of Hamdouch worked themselves into a frenzy during which they simulated their saint's dying agonies, hacking themselves on the head and breasts with hatchets and sharp stones. As a Dghoughia "Al" would have a good excuse for wanting to cross the mountains into Northern Morocco, and if once he could reach Marrakech he would have a chance of getting to the coast. He had hung about Taourirt for days, dancing, singing and doing tricks, afraid that at any moment somebody would detect his imposture. Finally in company with a couple of musicians, who played the darraboukeh and the flute, he had joined a caravan going over the Telouet Pass to Marrakech.

"We got in here last Thursday," he continued. "I'm nearly starved, Missy. We stage a pretty good show, but the competition's fierce, and all we git out of the Arabs is a few sous at the most. Half the time we don't git nothin' at all. We sleep nights over there with the camels back of the *fondak*. I'd about lost hope of ever gittin' away from here, when I saw you and yo' ma. This place is full of soldiers an' I'm afraid I'll be picked up as a deserter. That's why I dassn't speak to you in the square. I c'd only whistle to let you know I was an American. But when I caught sight of your face I saw deliverance! 'Praise Gawd,' I says to myself, 'There's an American lady sent to help me!' Don't turn me down, Missy. I can't stand it much longer! It will kill me to go back to the Legion. That's why I come to you. Help me to git back home!"

Had Nancy heard any such yarn before leaving the United States she would have treated it merely as the fantastic offspring of some fiction-writer's imagination. Hearing it in the moonlit garden of the Mamounia, to the weird accompaniment of the distant drums, she was ready to accept it as true. For the first time she realized the shortness of the step between comfort and distress, security and danger, civilization and barbarism, the poignant truth that "the wildest dreams of Kew" are the "facts of Khatmandhu." Suppose these things had happened to Robert? What would she think of an American girl who refused to help him under like conditions! She had nothing to fear from this wretched man. Had robbery been his purpose he would not be talking to her within earshot of the people upon the neighboring piazzas. She had only to scream, and he would be surrounded and dragged away to prison. She could not do less than the nomads. What were a couple of thousand francs to her? She had been to the bank that morning and the money was in her purse.

"Wait a moment," she whispered. "I'll help you." Stepping inside the window she took the money from her wallet and returning thrust it into his hand. "I'm giving this to you for the sake of one I love," she said. "I hope, if he needs it, another will do as much for him! Good luck to you!"

"God bless you, Missy!"

His lips touched her fingers and he dropped out of sight behind the balustrade. She stood there alone in the moonlight of the empty garden. Had she

dreamed it? No, her purse was empty. From a nearby piazza came the creak of a wicker chair and a man's voice.

"Civilize Africa? I'll say they won't! These Mohammedans will be exactly the same a thousand years from now,—when the French are as forgotten as the Phœnicians and the Romans and the Vandals!"

XI

THE underlying reason for Mrs. Vernon's determination to go abroad was that Nancy had obstinately refused to "come out." Her remorse at Robert's disappearance had wrought a complete change in the girl. She had become pale, taciturn and given to long periods of despondency, so that for a time her mother had feared that her health might be seriously affected. The trip to Atlantic City had accomplished nothing and Mrs. Vernon, who had looked forward to Nancy's *début* almost as much on her own account as on her daughter's, seeing her dreams of a brilliant social season in Washington gradually displaced by the uninspiring prospect of a monotonous winter on Bellevue Avenue, felt that she was being cheated. She made no attempt to hide her impression that Nancy was being both very silly and exceedingly selfish. The time for a girl to come out was when she had finished school. What was the matter with her? Didn't she want to see something of society, to get married? There was nobody for her to marry in Rome! They were foot free and with money enough to enjoy themselves wherever they wanted to go, and Nancy refused to do anything but mope. It was too bad! No matter how she felt a girl ought to have more regard for her mother—! Mrs. Vernon went so far as to cry a little.

But Nancy was obdurate. She had no ambition whatever to come out, she said, and she had seen all she wanted to of society in New York. Hadn't she received enough "social advantages" at Miss Penny's? No doubt she would marry some time, but she was in no hurry about it. Mrs. Vernon, terrified at the thought of having her own liberty caged by an unmarried daughter, resolved to take matters in her own hands. If Nancy stayed at home in Rome all winter it would be too late for her to come out the next. She would never come out! She might easily become an old maid. There was just one thing to do, —take her abroad for a year and, with the added lure of a Parisian accent and wardrobe, burst upon the world of society a year later. To this Nancy made no objection. Rome, where she was reminded at every turn of the one she loved, had become intolerable to her. They sailed for France in September and worked south through Normandy, the Basque country, and Castile, to Madrid, Granada, Seville and Algeciras, where Mrs. Vernon conceived her plan of touring in Morocco and Algeria.

And so far it really seemed to have been a success. Certainly it was, so far as she herself was concerned. "Transat" spelled happiness for her, she declared. The trip to Marrakech had been like travelling upon a magic carpet through the Arabian Nights. She was delighted to have found a winter resort with an unrivalled climate where she could not only indulge her taste for sightseeing but, amid beautiful and

luxurious surroundings, add to her social acquaintance. It was astonishing, she said, the number of people one knew, or at least had heard of, who turned up in Marrakech in spite of the fighting going on so close by in the Riff and the Tache de Taza. One wealthy New Yorker was even building a winter palace there, wisely preferring the genuine Orientalism of Morocco to the imitation of it at Palm Beach.

And then, of course, there would be Meknes and Fez to visit later on. One could really spend several winters, if one wished, motoring across those wonderful shining plains, and find something new at every turn. Yes, they would certainly go on to Fez just as soon as they had "done" Marrakech, but there was so much to see it would be weeks before they could tear themselves away.

Nancy, for the first time since she had left America, had become interested in what was going on about her. Robert was never long out of her mind, but no pretty girl in a frontier garrison town can remain undiscovered, least of all as charming a girl as Nancy, and it was not long before she found herself the centre of a group of admirers, which included not only the younger officers on leave, but several bearded generals, and even the great Caïd El Hadj Tami El Glaoui himself, who invited her to tea and afterward introduced her to the ladies of his household. Here too she met Dr. Madeline, the chief of the baby clinic supported by the white residents and wives of the French officers stationed at Marra-

kech, which furnishes free medical care and sterilized milk to thousands of phthisical and undernourished Arab children, the sight of whose dwindled limbs and scab-covered bodies wrung Nancy's heart.

She spent days drifting along in the variegated streams of humanity under the loosely woven palm-leaf awnings of the souks watching the tanners scouring their hides, the dyers wading in the iridescent puddles about their vats, and the leather-workers cutting the soft, brilliantly colored skins and embroidering them with scarlet, gold and silver thread. There were whole streets of slippers of every hue and finish, the more modest in price stacked one inside the other and leaning like long stalks of sunflowers against the walls of the shops. She loitered fascinated before the tiny forges of the gold-smiths and metal-workers, still fired with the goat-skin bellows of a dozen centuries ago, by the same solemn little Arab boys squatting beside them, her ears half-deafened by the hammering of the brass-workers deftly shaping bowls and trays, or chiselling with marvellous swiftness intricate designs on the fat bellies of jars and teapots.

Each guild of artisans had its own narrow alley of little open cubicles, elevated a foot or two above the street level, where its cross-legged owner carried on his trade in full view of the passers-by,—knife-makers, tailors, armorers, wool-dealers, and lapidaries, venders of wheat, dates, figs and almonds, each sitting atop a pyramid of merchandise six or

eight feet above the ground and ladelling it out by means of a long-handled scoop into which the purchaser afterward dropped his money. Some of the souks were dark smoke-blackened caves, where worked the blacksmiths and the dyers; others, such as those of the silk merchants, armorers and jewelers were light and full of color. It was a never-ceasing entertainment in which the industrious performers paid little attention to their audiences and apparently made no attempt to invite custom.

Nancy loved to linger beside the tiled fountains with their arches of red and green mosaics, while veiled women filled the long-necked, red jars slung on either side of their tiny donkeys; to peer into the shadowed courtyards of the *fondaks* which sheltered such visiting pilgrims as had no relatives to harbor them; or to listen to the "school" children, who, crowded into a low unventilated den, chanted the Koran in a never-ending nasal sing-song, for which instruction their parents paid the princely sum of two francs per week.

It never rained. Each morning the Vernons arose to see the sun blazing out of a cloudless sky and flooding the land with a fierce glare that drove one to seek relief in shadow, in spite of the cool, dry air. They toured a great deal.

Sometimes under the protection of the military commandant they motored far into the mountains along the roads under process of construction which should some day connect Marrakech with the Sous,

—to Ouichehdan and beyond Zerekten, into the Glaoua country, or made excursions to nearer points of interest such as Amismiz, a favorite camp-ground of the *Légion Etrangère*,—to Asni, with its majestic circle of overhanging peaks, twelve thousand feet in height,—to the orchards and gardens of Tamelet, and to Tazert, where stands the mediæval castle of the Caïd El Glaoui.

But in spite of the interest and romance of her surroundings, Nancy was always aware of the shadow upon her heart. She had made Mrs. Shafter promise to cable her Paris bankers the instant they had any word of Robert, but no message had ever come. It was now nearly ten months since he had gone away. Could it be possible that she would never see him again? These young French officers were well enough in their way, but she often wished that they would not be always quite so polite. She would have preferred less etiquette, fewer compliments, less consciousness of sex. They made her feel so old. After all, she was only just eighteen. She longed for the frank and easy companionship of American boys and girls, for its "jollying," its naturalness, its irreverences, even for its bad manners.

By March Mrs. Vernon had had enough of Marra-kech and as Mrs. Dunham, from whom she was now inseparable, had announced her decision to go to Fez, she decided to accompany her. Already the Feast of Ramadan had begun, the Feast in so many respects analogous to the Christian Lent, and which com-

memorates Mohammed's retirement to the cave in Mount Hora near Mecca for prayer and meditation, whence after being visited by the angel Gabriel he reappeared with the new technic of Islam. During this sacred ninth month of penitence and prayer, which is but one of the various Christian practices adopted by the Prophet to make his doctrines acceptable to the followers of other religions, all the Faithful over the age of sixteen must fast from sunrise to sunset. They may neither eat nor drink, not even moisten their lips with a drop of water, suck a lemon, smoke, or swallow their own spittle. During Ramadan, therefore, the Arab sleeps in the daytime in order to make his fast the easier, and begins his real day at sunset, eating, drinking, and revelling throughout the night.

Owing to the great numbers of native visitors who are forever pouring into Marrakech from the *bled*, the uplands of the Atlas, and the Sous, Nancy did not notice any abatement in the picturesque activities which went on day by day in The Fna. There was always plenty going on there. The groups about the sorcerers, snake-charmers, story-tellers and musicians seemed as large as ever. But, once the sunset gun marking the end of the day's fast had been fired, the noise in the market place broke out in trebled intensity and continued unabated until sunrise. By night under the flare of oil torches the scene was wildly bizarre and savage, for the fasters who had been drowsing all day awoke to a frenzy of physical

enjoyment. The Fna resembled the encampment of a victorious army given over to feasting and hilarity.

During the first morning of Ramadan Nancy was awakened while it was still dark by a mournful booming sound regularly repeated, which seemed to her to be coming from the garden outside her window. What it was she could not imagine. To her sleep-dazed ears it sounded not unlike the boom of a huge bull-frog in a neighboring ditch. Yet it seemed too loud for a frog, unless it were some gigantic species peculiar to the Atlas. "Boom-oom-o-o-m!" it went. "Boom-oom-o-o-m!" Might it not be perhaps the buzz of some tropical insect caught in the meshes of the mosquito netting close to her head? She got up and went to the window. The sound was as loud as ever and seemed to come from outside. It was so weird, so unearthly that it brought back all the unreasoning terror and feeling of unknown menace she had experienced during the earlier part of her stay at Marrakech. She tried, next morning, to explain the character of the sound and find out from some one what it was, but nobody seemed to know. The manager of the hotel even appeared to think that perhaps, after all, it might really have been a bull-frog or a colossal mosquito. It was Mohommed Abu Mandril who at last solved the mystery:

"She big horn over there in The Fna. She blow to wake people up."

XII

It was Washington's Birthday and the usual "February thaw" had set in, turning the snow on Broadway into a corn-meal mush through which rivulets of blue water followed the ruts and overflowed into wide pools at the crossings. The icicles along the veranda eaves dripped steadily. Occasionally one would fall with a soft thump. The asphalt of the sidewalks glistened and steamed in the bright afternoon sun.

Mr. and Mrs. Shafter having eaten a lonely dinner were sitting in the parlor gazing disconsolately out of the window.

"Rotten weather!" grumbled the Hon. Hiram. "I hate holidays!—Nothin' to do!"

"Why don't you go out and take a walk?" asked Mrs. Shafter.

"In all that wet?—Nowhere to go, anyway! I was thinking you might like to take in the show down to the 'Star' to-night. It might amuse you."

"I don't feel much like going to shows these days," answered his wife.

Mr. Shafter removed his cigar.

"You mustn't take it so hard, Mattie!" he said. "After all, Robert isn't the first boy to run away and he won't be the first to come back, either. You ought

to try to cheer up. A little fun would do you good. They're advertising a gala performance—kind of a minstrel show I guess. I saw one of 'em down in the square,—a regular holler!"

"What was he like?"

"He was a big buck nigger in a bell-shaped silk hat and a blue overcoat with green binding like what we called a 'surtout' when I was a boy, and kind of lavender pants, and spats and patent leathers, and yellow gloves. I couldn't make out whether he was acting as a sort of 'ad' for the show or was wearing his regular duds."

"He was an 'ad' most likely."

"I don't know. He seemed to take himself mighty serious.—And he had a pink satin ascot tie and a plaid waistcoat and an ivory cane with a green handle,—a swell nigger all right!"

"Of course it was an 'ad'!"

"'Hooch' Googins said they came in on a three-car special about noon. He claims they're hot stuff. They gave him a couple of passes. We haven't been anywheres for nearly six months an' I thought maybe——"

"Why don't you go by yourself if you want to?—Anyhow, if I were you I'd go out now and take a walk. It isn't so wet."

Mrs. Shafter got up and went to the bay-window.

"I guess there's your swell nigger right now," she remarked. "Or another just like him.—I do believe he's coming in here!" she added.

"Distributing hand-bills probably," commented her husband. "He'll just throw it in and go away."

But at that moment the bell rang.

"Selling tickets," said Mr. Shafter. "What do you say? Shall I get a couple?"

He went to the door and cautiously opened it a crack.

"What do you want?" he inquired in his usual hostile manner. Even on the level of the porch the negro towered considerably above him.

"Does this hyah residence belong to the Honorable Hiram W. Shafter?" inquired the visitor, elegantly removing his hat which shone with a lustre unknown to Rome.

"It does," replied Mr. Shafter mollified by the tribute to his social station. "I am Mr. Shafter."

The visitor made a sweeping bow.

"Permit me to introduce mahself," said he, handing Mr. Shafter a card bearing the inscription:

"Mr. Napoleon B. Johnson
The World's Premier Dancing and Singing Comedian
Specialty Acts—Juggling—Black Bottom
All the latest song hits
Exclusive management of B. F. Scutt
Now with Shinhopple's Universal Minstrels."

Mr. Shafter examined it with suspicion.

"Well," he said at length in the tone he used to discourage life-insurance and book agents. "What can I do for you?"

"Is you the paternal parent of Mistah Doolee?" inquired Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Shafter stared at him.

"Mister Dooly? What are you talking about?" he stammered with a sudden contraction of his throat muscles.

There was a rustle behind him.

"Perhaps he means Robert!" cried Mrs. Shafter with sudden divination. "Do you know anything of our son?"

Mr. N. B. Johnson, alias "Al Jolson," being gifted with a well-developed histrionic sense, realized that he had unexpectedly stumbled into a situation of dramatic possibilities. The paper which Robert had intrusted to him upon the night of the attack on Tichkoukt had long since vanished and he had entirely forgotten the incident until, unexpectedly finding himself in Rome, Ohio, the name had suddenly recalled Robert to his mind. It was Dooly's home town all right, but for the life of him he could not remember what had been Dooly's real name. An ironic situation! Arrayed in his best clothes he had wandered up and down the streets until it had suddenly occurred to him that he might refresh his laggard memory by reference to the local telephone directory. The device had proved successful. "Shafter, Hiram W., 14 Broadway"! The sight of the printed words had instantly brought back the picture of the bivouac in the ravine where Dooly had

handed him the scrap of paper by the light of a candle before the charge.

"If I croak and you come through, get word to my folks."

He could do better than that. He could be the bearer of good news! Mr. Johnson, the world's premier dancing and singing comedian, was much impressed by the elegance of the Shafter residence. Dooly had sure lived in a swell dump! And his folks were swell folks! As one about to impart information of vital import he resolved that the incident should lose nothing so far as his part in it was concerned.

"If you is the parents of mah friend Mr. Robert Shafter of the *Troisième Battalion, Légion Etrangère*, otherwise known Mistah Doolee,—I does!" he replied impressively.

Mrs. Shafter, who had thrust aside her husband, gripped the negro by his coat-sleeves.

"Is he alive?" she demanded tremulously. "Tell me! Is my boy alive?"

"Al's" mouth expanded into the grin which had carried him successfully from Tichkoukt to Marra-kech.

"It gives me pleasure to inform you," he announced, "that when last heard from yo' son was both alive and well!"

Mrs. Shafter clasped her hands.

"Thank God!" she cried. "O, thank God!" Then reaching for her handkerchief she began to sob. The

Hon. Hiram, for the first time in many years, publicly put his arms about her.

"Where is Robert?" he demanded.

"In the Tache de Taza."

"Where's that?"

"In the Atlas Mountains—Morocco!"

"In Morocco!" stammered Mr. Shafter. "That's somewhere in Africa, isn't it?—How in Heaven's name did he ever get *there!*"

It was after six o'clock before "Al" left the house. For three hours the Shafter's had listened to his account of Robert's life in the Legion, the attack on the fort, "Al's" own wanderings in the desert, his adventures as a holy man and his eventual escape from Morocco through the generosity of an unknown American lady, which had enabled him to reach Casablanca and, with the aid of forged papers, to secure passage to America via Bordeaux. While awaiting the departure of his steamer he had unexpectedly encountered on the quays none other than "Pepin le Grand," clad in a ready-made civilian suit of blue, blue scarf and blue tam-o'-shanter, on his way back to Paris, his discharge from the Legion in his pocket, a bullet in his knee-cap, and the ribbon of the Croix de Guerre in his lapel.

From him "Al" had learned that on the night of the attack the battalion had waited on the ridge opposite Tichkoukt for the return of the relief party, and after the explosion had descended into the ra-

vine and crossed the brook. Here they had been driven back, compelled to recross the stream and to retire again to the height. When no one returned it became clear that the attack must have failed. With the coming of the dawn it was possible by the aid of glasses to see the ruined blockhouse and the Berbers moving about on the plateau. Gradually the terrible conviction was forced upon them that nobody out of the gallant band of rescuers remained alive. A squadron of Spahis had made a reconnaissance of the ravine and reported no survivors, and after waiting another six hours the battalion had reluctantly retired.

Three weeks later Robert, to the amazement of the staff, had made his appearance at Taghzout whence he had been invalided to Fez, afterward rejoining his battalion of the *Groupe Mobile*, which had been sent to construct and garrison a new line of blockhouses further east in the country of the Aït Messaad. "Al" had not written to him from Casablanca for fear lest his own presence might become known to the military authorities before he could make his escape. As it was, "Al's" name was now inscribed on the Legion's Roll of Honorable Dead. It should stay there. And now he was back at his old job and doing well.

He departed after having eaten an entire angel cake and smoked four of Mr. Shafter's best five-cent cigars, promising to return next day. There was in his opinion, he informed them, not the slightest hope of securing Robert's release from the Legion before the

expiration of his five years of service which would be in June, 1929.

"All the same I'm going to write to 'Nick' Longworth to-morrow!" declared Mr. Shafter from the depths of the horse-hair covered armchair. "What's the use of being chairman of your county committee, if it can't help you at a time like this? I'll bet the State Department can find some way of fixing it so as to get Robert out."

His voice had regained something of its old authoritative ring.

"Write?" inquired Mrs. Shafter sharply.

"Yeh,—first thing to-morrow morning."

His wife appeared suddenly to swell in the lamp light.

"*Write!*" The word nearly shattered the glass case containing the woodpecker.

"Sure.—What d' you want me to do?"

Mrs. Shafter leaned forward and shook her finger at him. "Listen here, Hiram Shafter! If you expect me to sit around in Rome, Ohio, while you and 'Nick' Longworth write letters to each other, when my only son is being killed by Arabs out in the wilds of Africa, you're mighty well mistaken!"

"What else can we do, Mattie?" he asked uneasily.

"What's the State Department got to do with it?" she demanded. "If Robert has joined a foreign army and we want to get him out, it seems to me the right person to ask would be the general in command. He's the one who'd naturally have the say so, and

you'd only be wasting time hanging around Washington trying to make appointments with politicians. I remember how it was when you wanted to get that nomination——"

The Hon. Hiram interrupted her.

"Well, what do *you* say we ought to do?"

"Go straight out to Morocco ourselves."

"Morocco!—Africa!—This time of year!"

"Why not? That's where Robert is!"

"Mattie, you're crazy! They're fighting out there! Besides, what would become of my business?"

Mrs. Shafter fairly bristled. He had never seen her like that.

"The question is what will become of your son!" she informed him indignantly. "Get hold of 'Nick' Longworth, if you want to! Only, if you do, for Heaven's sake, go and see him yourself or telephone—don't write! Persuade the State Department to take the matter up, if you can. But I'm not willing to let it go at that. Do you realize that it's nearly ten months since Robert ran away? And that he's been fighting Arabs out in the deserts and mountains ever since with no one to look out for his health? He may be half-frozen this very minute! I've let you dictate to me long enough, Hiram Shafter, in matters in which I'm vitally concerned. After this I'm going to take a hand in things myself. You can do anything you like,—but I'm going to Morocco and,—what's more,—I'm going *by the very first boat!*"

"Well, well, Mattie," expostulated her husband.

"No use in getting so excited! I'm as anxious to have Robert back as you are. I merely don't want you to go off at half-cock. If Robert has stood it as long as this, he ought to be able to get along for a few days while we find out how to go about it."

"The best way to go about it is—to go!"

Mr. Shafter's gaze rested unhappily upon the "Memorial History of Columbus."

"Do you know where Morocco is?—I don't!" he admitted.

"Not exactly, but of course I didn't want to let on before that nigger. I don't care where it is, I'm going anyway. And I'm going prepared for all eventualities. If they won't let Robert out of the Foreign Legion for another three years in spite of my prayers, I'm going to wait for him out there so as to be near him."

"I guess you'll wait!"

"Maybe I will and maybe I won't. Neither of us knows a thing about it!—You let me manage something for once. It's only a quarter to seven. Call up 'Nick' Longworth in Washington on long-distance and find out if he can see us to-morrow morning, while I look up in the paper what steamers are sailing for Africa. Then I'll start Mary packin' our things and send her down to the station to get reservations.—Can you think of anybody in town who knows anything about Morocco?"

Mr. Shafter pondered, seeking inspiration from the plaster statuette of Daniel Webster.

"Not unless it's the Rev. Jones,—he was on the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions. He might know something. I'll telephone over and ask him. I wish I hadn't lent that atlas to Carrie Vernon! She forgot to give it back,—and I'll have to borrow some money—a lot of it!—Say!" he shouted coming suddenly to himself. "*I can't start for AFRICA—to-MOR-row!*"

"Yes, you can, too!" retorted Mrs. Shafter.

"Dear me!" panted the Rev. Jones as he entered the Shafter parlor half an hour later with an armful of books. "I certainly congratulate you on having had news of Robert! Are you really going to Africa? How exciting! No, I have never been there, but I once had a friend who went to Abyssinia and I have brought over my subscription edition of Stanley's account of how he discovered Dr. Livingstone."

"I hope you brought a map!" sniffed Mrs. Shafter.

"I brought the 'A' and 'M' volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica," replied the Rev. Jones. "I think you'll find everything you want in there, including maps."

So while the word flew through the town that Robert had been found, and Mr. Shafter hunted vainly for that pepper-and-salt suit he had sent downtown last week to be pressed, such of the neighbors who were not attending "Shinhopple's Universal Minstrels" at the Star Theatre gathered at the Shafter homestead and learned from the lips of the Rev. Jones, that Morocco was an independent state of

North Africa under the "protection" of the French; that it was known as "El Maghrib el Aska" or "The Farthest West" of the Mohammedan world; that the ruler was named Moulay Yussef, and that the sultanate consisted approximately of 300,000 square miles more or less depending upon the varying allegiance of the local tribes, which was "questionable and intermittent."

"That don't help me a bit as to what clothes I'd better take!" lamented Mrs. Shafter. "I always supposed Africa was a hot place. Yet if it's all full of mountains——!"

"I'm going to take my heavy flannels along anyhow," her husband had asserted.

"And your revolver!" advocated the Rev. Jones. "I certainly should advise it, with plenty of ammunition. You might easily find yourself in a position to need it. I'd be careful where I went. The natives are said to be very fierce in all those parts."

As her husband was accustomed to say at a later and less hectic time, "You know when Mattie once gets started, there ain't nuthin' can stop her!"—and the midnight train, to which the three cars of "Shin-hopple's Universal Minstrels" were also attached, had carried the Shafter to Washington. Here, accompanied by Mr. N. B. Johnson, they had called next day on Speaker Longworth, and had subsequently laid their case before a polite young gentleman at the State Department. An interchange of cables with the American Embassy at Paris had

brought a request from M. Painlevé, the French War Minister, for Robert's birth certificate, or "*acte de naissance*," attested before a French consul, showing him to have been under age when he enlisted. In order to procure this they were obliged to return to Ohio, and by the time that Mr. Shafter had attended to certain necessary business arrangements previously overlooked in the flurry of their departure, the "Dulio," on which they had booked their passage to Gibraltar, was ready to sail.

As the Hon. Hiram had frankly admitted to his wife, he had had, before he started, no definite idea of where Morocco might be. He knew in a vague way that it was somewhere in the northern part of Africa, but he was ignorant of its geographic relationship to either Algeria, Tunis or the Sahara. He was equally indefinite as to the whereabouts of the Riff and the identity of Abd-El-Krim. He was aware that the French possessed Algeria, but he knew nothing of their position in Morocco or the form of its government. Fez was familiar to him as a name,—a mysterious Oriental City, read about in his childhood perhaps,—or was it a cap of some sort? A cap with a tassel? Casablanca he had heard of, but Meknes, Mogador and Marrakech were not even names to him.

Now, stretched comfortably in his deck chair in the warm spring sunshine, lulled by the slow rise and gentle fall of the long deck, the seething of the

waves against the sides, and the faint shouts of the shuffle-board players, and aided by a few books of travel, he eagerly familiarized himself with the history of the country into whose fastnesses his only son had vanished from the parental vision.

He learned from Mrs. Wharton's "In Morocco" how, five hundred years before the beginning of the Christian Era, the Carthaginians had sent Hanno, with thirty thousand colonists, along the northern edge of Africa and down the West Coast as far as Guinea, where they had found elephants, apes and ivory, hair-covered men and "savages called gorillas"; how the Romans had followed, and strung their defenses across the valleys north of the Middle Atlas from Volubilis to Sale, to guard their African granary from the Berbers, exporting to the Imperial City slaves, horses for their cavalry, wild animals for their gladiatorial contests, pearls and honey; how five hundred years later the Vandals had overrun the country, only to vanish like their predecessors before the irresistible tide of Arab conquest in the eighth century; how the Almoravids, one of the "Veiled Tribes," had crossed the Atlas from the Sahara in 1062, invaded the fertile valleys to the north, and founded the City of Marrakech, only to be driven out by the Merinids, desert nomads, whom they had engaged as mercenaries to defend their empire; how next the Saadians, Cherifian Arabs, on the wave of a religious revival, had proclaimed a *djihad*, or holy war, against the Portuguese upon the Atlantic coast and taken

possession of the country, only to be eventually wiped out by a hardier tribe from the mountains of the Tafilelt,—the Hassanians,—the third of whose Sultans, the terrible Moulay-Ismaïl, had ruled long and triumphantly at Meknes from 1672 to 1727.

Mr. Shafter was greatly interested in Sultan Moulay-Ismaïl, who had left behind him a stable three miles in length, built to hold twelve thousand horses, an army of ten thousand negroes, of many of whom he was said to be the father, a palace encompassed by a wall twenty-five miles in length, and a considerable addition to the population by way of some seven hundred sons and even more numerous daughters.

"He must have been some feller!" he muttered. "I thought that sort of stuff was all bunk!—Arabian Nights! I'd like to see that palace. I wonder shall we go to Meknes!"

His interest was not decreased when he read how this fierce monarch had made a practice of neatly decapitating the slave holding his bridle when leaping upon his horse, and had not only sought to rival his contemporary Louis XIV of France as a creator of gardens and builder of stately pleasure domes, but had even presumed to make an offer for the hand of the Princesse de Conti, one of *Le Grand Monarque* legitimatized offspring.

He discovered that he was having a wholly new and exciting experience. Romance, he had always supposed, was to be found only in fiction, which—

with the possible exception of the "business stories" in a certain widely read weekly—he had hitherto held in contempt. Now, all of a sudden, his practical little cerebellum was knocked askew by a dazzling panorama of actual history more colorful than anything he had ever imagined. Ali-Baba, Aladdin, Sindbad, seemed shabby figures beside these fierce imperial sultans who, time after time, had swept over the Mogreb, destroying the palaces, gardens and temples of their predecessors, to build new and more ravishing ones by the aid of myriads of slaves from the Soudan or white captives from Christian ships. Pirates? Why the whole coast of North Africa from Sale to Tripoli had been lousy with them! Every seaport town had been a nest of deadly, stinging insects! Black slaves for Europe, white slaves for Morocco, had been bought, sold, and exchanged in the great slave markets of Fez and Marrakech. Why, they had even auctioned off Americans on the block in Fez!

"Gosh!" he murmured, laying down his book. "Thirty thousand Christian slaves in Africa! And not so long ago, at that!—To think of the United States paying tribute to those fellows!"

Why had the United States paid tribute to a Mohammedan ruler four thousand miles away? A lot of niggers! *Were* they just a lot of niggers?—And then there was that confounded preamble to the treaty of 1797 with the Sultan of Tripoli beginning: "Whereas the United States are in no sense a Chris-

tian nation!" You could have knocked him down with a feather! The United States *not* a Christian nation? He didn't understand. He'd have to ask somebody. And to be going to ask anybody was, for Mr. Shafter, a tremendous concession.

The gray cortex of the Shafter mind, concerned for forty years only with the façade of the Five Cents Savings Bank at Rome, Ohio, was for a tantalizing moment illumined by the flash of scimitars and of bridles inlaid with gold; his ear-drums, deadened to the sound of aught save the click of the cash register, echoed to the thunder of distant hoof-beats, the shouting of armed men.

The first result of his illumination had been a reluctant realization of his general ignorance; the second, of his own personal unimportance; the third, the discovery that what he had regarded as a tremendous and complicated undertaking amounted to little or nothing. The mere thought of having to get ready, secure passage, and cross the Atlantic in the middle of winter had filled him with dismay. In point of fact it had involved no more difficulty than boarding the train for New York. Once Mary had packed his things and he had wired for his accommodations on the "Dulio," he had had no worry whatsoever. He almost resented the fact that so momentous an event in his family history should have involved no more fuss and feathers and attracted so little attention.

Most of the fuss, and all of the feathers, had

been confined to Rome, and nobody on the "Dulio" seemed at all surprised that Mr. Shafter happened to be aboard or should be going to Morocco. He could remember what a time there had been when his father and mother had gone to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, and he had expected something like that,—tremendous excitement and running around. Nothing of the sort at all! You went to Africa the same way you went to the theatre,—just bought a ticket and went. No trouble about anything! Once there, you put yourself in the hands of something called the "*Compagnie Général Transatlantique*," and it did all the rest. Frankly, if one could travel as simply as that he didn't know as he blamed Carrie Vernon so much after all. It wasn't real "gallivanting," so to speak. You travelled almost as calmly and easily as you could live at home, and considerably more luxuriously! Also you could take a drink if you wanted it, without any consciousness of guilt. And although the Hon. Hiram was politically dry, he was personally a thirsty man.

XIII

"WHAT this country needs most is a good five-cent cigar!" remarked the Hon. Hiram W. Shafter as he ruefully examined his valise in the foyer of the "Transat" Hotel at Casablanca. "These won't last more'n a week! Say, sister!" he addressed the young lady behind the *caisse*, "Can you tell me where I can buy a decent smoke?"

He had admired the young lady ever since his arrival at the hotel that morning. In his opinion she was much better looking than the winner of any beauty contest he had followed in the Sunday roto-gravure sections at home. Her color was rich, her contour definite, and there was something about both that distinctly stirred him. Moreover she was so earnest and efficient—a good business woman, he'd say,—beautiful—and good! It was an opening anyhow.

"*Pardon, m'sieu?*"

"Oo ay lar tobac?"

The manager unexpectedly appeared from the recess behind the *caisse*. The beautiful young lady was his wife.

"If m'sieu will follow this street and turn first to the right and then to the left he will find a magazine for tabac," he said politely. "Shall I send a guide with m'sieu?"

"Don't want any guide!" replied the Hon. Hiram with a touch of resentment. "What time does the bus start for Rabat?"

"Four o'clock, m'sieu."

"I'll be back long before that. If my wife asks for me, tell her I've gone out to do a little shopping."

For a moment he dallied with the idea of buying something for Mattie. She had had a bad night on the boat and was lying down. A rug, maybe. They seemed awful cheap. He'd look around. Plenty of time. It was only one-thirty. He followed the well-paved street and turned to the right, as directed.

Casablanca looked like a beautiful, white, pleasure city rather than the chief seaport of a country carrying on two wars. In general effect it struck him as resembling the buildings at the Chicago World's Fair which he had visited on his wedding trip.

"Or like the Buffalo Exposition!" he meditated. "The world's the same everywhere. You see the pictures and you see it all."

Whether it was to carry out this theory of international uniformity or because he had left Ohio in such a hurry, Mr. Shafter, although now in Africa, was arrayed in the Sunday clothes he was accustomed to wear at home, namely, a somewhat over-long and floppy black frock-coat, steel-blue pantaloons, Congress shoes, and a black bowler hat. No tall hat had been seen in Rome, Ohio, since 1861, except that worn by Mr. Myron Herrick at the laying of the

corner-stone of the public library in 1910. Hence the incongruity of a frock-coat and bowler passed as unnoticed there as it did now in Casablanca.

"Absolutely!—You could of seen the same thing right in Buffalo!" he said to himself. "That hotel's just as good as any you could find in Columbus—an' a good deal prettier. It don't look to me as if they could be having much of a war on here. Yes sir!—Just like Buffalo!" he repeated.

He visited several kiosks, but, although various kinds of cigarettes were on sale, there was a paucity of cigars, and those exhibited made a Wheeling stogy look like a Carona-Carona. All the same, Casablanca was clearly an up and coming place, with all modern improvements. There were wide avenues opening out of broad squares, lined with arcaded shops, banks, restaurants, and moving-picture palaces. There were even churches. Some of the boulevards made him think of Washington, D. C.,—on a smaller scale. If this was savage Africa the French were doing pretty well! Probably this war talk was mostly bunk, too.

And then, without having the slightest intimation of what lay behind it the Hon. Hiram stepped through a gateway in an ochre-colored wall and found himself—in Bagdad!

For several seconds his Congress shoes were rooted solidly to the ground in blank amazement. He was at the convergence of three streets—if they could be called streets—so narrow as to leave but chinks of

blue between the overhanging cliffs of roofs. Just inside the wall stood a square, pinkish-white tower, with curious little windows in it, which he recognized as a mosque. Through this labyrinth of malodorous alleys flowed a never-ending procession of human beings. The streams going in opposite directions pushed, mingled, jammed, fought for foothold, and hurried on again. The walls echoed to the shouts of fruit-venders, auctioneers and donkey-drivers, the barking of dogs, the squealing of children, the squonk of mules, the ceaseless clatter of human tongues. Over all floated a synthetic odor blent of garlic, spice, leather, rotten garden-truck, fruit-rinds, and donkeydung.

A shining collection of utensils of chiselled brass attracted Mr. Shafter's interest and, side-stepping the mud puddles and piles of filth, he picked his way across the square. A skinny rug merchant beckoned to him but Hiram did not like his face. Endeavoring to escape the man's importunities he drew away and, before he was aware what had happened, was caught in the crowd and drawn along with it. At first he tried ineffectually to make his way against the tide whence he had come, but in spite of his best efforts he was shoved and pushed in the opposite direction, until ducking up an alley to escape, he found himself in a different street and became instantly lost beyond recall.

The place was like a semi-subterranean rabbit-warren! So many people all going in different direc-

tions—with not a single white face among them! It was interesting, but—! He couldn't see a policeman anywhere. How the devil was he going to find his way back to the hotel? Suppose there should be a race riot? They would think nothing of sticking a knife through the guts of an infidel,—*his* guts! The idea was unpleasant. He looked about for help. Perhaps he could find some one who spoke English? That young woman with pasty face, her ears, neck and arms clinking with brass rings, her blue-rimmed eyes staring so boldly at him from under her tattooed forehead with its bizarre pendant—something told him that he had better *not* ask *her*! Who then? A crowd of curious onlookers gathered about him, jabbering French and Arabic, doubtless making insulting remarks, jeering at him, plotting how to drag him into some near-by *cul de sac* and rob him. Some tried to force him to buy things which he did not want—all sorts of things,—amulets of embroidered leathers.

“Mag-gik!” They whispered shading their mouths with their hands. “Mag-gik! Make woman haf bébé! Mag-gik! *Huit francs*! Take?—*Cinq francs*?—Take? *Deux francs*!—Take! Take!—Mag-gik!”

Beggars, blind, leprous, mangy-headed, tweaked his sleeves, thrusting their sores and amputated limbs into his face.

“Gim-me! Gim-me!” they whined tugging at his coat.

From being merely nervous, he became alarmed.

They hemmed him in so that he could not move even if he had known where he wanted to go.

"Get away from me!" he shouted. "Get out of here!" They paid no attention to him.

He was a fool ever to have got into such a place—a perfect fool! "The Perfect Fool"? Across the mists of the Atlantic drifted the vision of a fat man solemnly trying to sing a song—Ed. Wynne, the last line ending in "giddi-gidick!" It sounded sort of Arabic.

"Giddi-gi-dick!" shouted the Hon. Hiram at his tormentors for want of a better word. "Giddi-gi-dick!"

Was it Arabic?

Whatever it was, it worked! An open sesame—an abacadabra! The crowd fell back, the wicked ceased from troubling.

"Giddi-gi-dick!" yelled Hiram, frowning upon them.

Suddenly they began to scream with laughter, rocking and reeling with mirth.

"Giddi-gi-dick! Giddi-gi-dick!" they cackled. The beggars repeated it chuckling; the small boys passed it shrilly up the street; the by-standers joined in the unholy mirth. What horrible thing did it mean?—The Hon. Hiram never knew.

Unexpectedly help appeared from another quarter.

"*Barek!—Barek!*" came like the cracking of a whip, as a stalwart negro, in pink caftan and white

burnoose strode round the corner thrusting aside the crowd. Behind him, upon a richly caparisoned gray mule, rode a stately *caïd* draped in snowy silk, his bare feet thrust into up-curving yellow slippers, his caftan of bright green indicating him to be a descendant of the Prophet. Impassive, serene, he kept his eyes aloof from the throng who one and all respectfully made way for him. In this welter of pauperism, disease, vice, and possibly crime, he towered like a white lighthouse of cleanliness and respectability. Certainly he was that for Mr. Shafter, who instantly recognized that here was one of his own kind,—a regular fellow! Stepping quickly alongside the mule he raised his bowler hat.

"Say," he inquired politely, "can you show me how to get out of this mess?"

It was the method sanctified by Arab tradition for a thousand years by which any suppliant may present his cause or beg for favor, but of this Mr. Shafter was unaware. The *caïd* drew rein slightly, allowed his gaze to take in the applicant for mercy, and—passed on! The fact that he paid not the slightest attention to him did not abash the Hon. Hiram, who had a life to save. Straightway he fell in behind, and, sticking as close to the mule's stern as circumstances and discretion allowed, and at times even guiding his steps by clinging tightly to the animal's tail, he followed the *caïd*. Thus, preceded as it were by herald and out-rider, and having a passage cleared for him through the throng, the Hon. Hiram emerged

at length through another gate into a large, open, sunny square just outside the walls.

"Whew!" he ejaculated as he let go of the mule's tail. "—Wow!"

Standing but a few feet away was the strangest animal he had ever seen,—a sort of four-legged ostrich covered with brown fur, and having a face with an enormous upper lip. And, as the Hon. Hiram gazed upon him in wonder, this grotesque quadruped lifted up its head, yawned, exhibited a horrible row of stained yellow-greenish teeth, and uttered a protesting roar that sent the goose-flesh pricking up and down the Hon. Hiram's back. He had seen pictures of camels more than a thousand times probably,—“still” pictures and moving-pictures,—and yet the reality was in its effect wholly different from the artistic reproduction. Part of this was the smell,—a strange, sort of desert smell.

“Wow!” repeated the Hon. Hiram.

A spindly Arab rushed up and whacked the camel on its back porch. It lumbered off, groaning. Across the square a sort of open market was being held. Tom-toms were thumping, fifes squealing. Ragged figures, surrounded by crowds of admirers, capered and tossed their arms in the air. Strings of donkeys and caravans of camels reclined beneath the wall. The smell of the desert mingled with that of the native quarter from the gateway behind him. In the near distance, just beyond the roofs of the white-washed houses bordering the square, rose the pink

tower of the mosque. High above it a black insect, humming through the gilded blue, marked the arrival of the tri-weekly mail *par avion* from Toulouse.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed. "This is pretty near the real thing! It ain't so exactly the same as I expected at that! It's like the pictures all right, and yet it's different somehow! I wonder what it is! Mattie ought to see this! I'll go get her!"

Then with a certain air of bravado as befitted the Republican boss of Union County he started off through the crowd in the direction of the hotel.

"*Barek!—Barek!*"—he ejaculated at frequent intervals. "*Giddi-gi-dick!*"

§ 2

Similar contrasts between past and present, of which, had they but known it, the old *caïd* on his donkey and the Hon. Hiram in his derby were so noticeable an example, repeated themselves constantly on the way to Rabat later in the afternoon,—in the red and blue gasoline stations juxtaposed with camels stalking endlessly about desert wells, in the *koubbas* of long departed *marabouts* cheek by jowl with tin-roofed portable houses of strident reds and yellows, in the gasoline tractor floundering next to camels and burros in double harness, in the Renault limousine gliding by the patient ass of Balaam.

Even the capital, Rabat itself, while, fresh and sparkling, with its government buildings of adapted

Moorish architecture, and its palaces and gardens, seemed a mushroom city when contrasted with its yellow neighbor, Sale, scarce a stone's throw across the Bou Rogreg, the pirate stronghold where Robinson Crusoe was held prisoner by the corsairs.

The Shafers had been instructed to present their letters to the military authorities at Rabat as the first step toward obtaining Robert's release; but it was too late in the afternoon to do so upon their arrival, and after depositing their bags at the picturesque Moorish villa which the "Transat" has adapted for a hotel, they crossed the opposite square to the mighty arch of the Kasbah of the Oudayas and spent the sunset hours on its crenellated red ramparts above the Arab cemetery, watching the long rollers from the cobalt Atlantic hurl themselves thundering upon the rock-ribbed beach.

As the Shafers in the twilight crossed the garden of the "Transat" a young man in the white fatigue uniform of the *Légion Etrangère* arose and came to meet them. An empty sleeve was pinned across his breast. To Mrs. Shafter he did not look so very much older than Robert. Poor boy! She wondered how he had lost his arm. Her heart warmed to him.

"Excuse me," he said, addressing the Hon. Hiram rather formally. "Are you Mr. Shafter?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Shafter with equal formality.

"My name's Burbank—Lieutenant David Burbank, *Deuxième Etrangère*. Colonel Steiglitz up at Headquarters sent me down here to be of what as-

sistance I could to you. You see, I'm an American—from Bridgeport, Connecticut. I've picked up a word or two of Arabic." Then seeing the look in Mrs. Shafter's eyes he suddenly beamed. "I'm to stick by you while you're here, you know! Gee! But I'm glad to meet some home-folks!"

His red hair accentuated his pallor and illuminated the friendliness of his smile.

"Bridgeport, Connecticut!" repeated Mr. Shafter gazing upon Lieut. Burbank as he might upon a new and desirable variety of camel. "Well, I'll be darned! —Bridgeport!" he added, as if dumbstruck with amazement.

"There are a couple of us Yanks in the Legion. There's Hamilton of the *Quatrième*, a hell of a good officer!"

"Do you know our son Robert?" asked Mrs. Shafter. "He's in the Legion."

"What is his regiment?"

"The third."

Burbank shook his head.

"No, they're up in the Tache de Taza. I've been with the second bucking old Abd-El-Krim in the Riff.—I lost an arm up there. I'm just out of hospital. They tell me Sidi Raho is getting pretty gay again. Those Berbers are a tough lot!"

Once started he did not seem able to stop talking. Life in the Legion was hard, he said, but there was a lot of excitement to it and that was what he wanted. The war had left him at loose ends. He had held a

commission as aviator in the French army and, having nothing better to do when the big show ended, had had himself transferred to the *Etrangère*. Now that he had only one arm he didn't know what was going to happen. However, they were awfully decent about such things and maybe—it being his left arm, luckily!—they would arrange to let him stay on.

During the excellent dinner furnished by the "Transat," of which Lieut. Burbank ate enormously besides sharing a bottle of vintage champagne with his host, they all became very friendly and confidential.

"Don't know any of my folks, do you?" he inquired as he accepted one of the last of Mr. Shafter's cherished examples of what his native country needed most. "There's good Burbanks,—like Luther, you know,—and a lot of bum ones. Mine are pretty punk! That's the reason I'm here. Morocco's a marvellous country and the French are simply wonderful, but it's no place for an American. What happened was, I wanted to be an artist. I do quite a lot of sketching,—I'll show you some of my stuff sometime, maybe,—but my old man insisted on my going into the shoe-business! So I beat it. Do you blame me? Fellow ought to get out and look around for himself, anyhow. I kind of hanker for the old town, though. I'll be going back pretty soon I guess. You see, I can resign any time because I'm an officer! That's the difference. An enlisted man has to stay his full five years."

"Pity you can't stay here awhile," he told them. "Rabat is well worth seeing—and so is Sale. The view from the Hassan Tower is a peach, and the Tomb of the Black Sultan at Chella with its little blue-green minaret is one of the loveliest things in all Morocco. Honest, there's an old fig-tree down there that's actually stuck its branches right through the roof, and seems to be clasping the whole place in its arms! You never saw such a tangle of vines, such shadow—! Once you pass under that big gate with its crumbling towers you feel like you'd stepped out of time altogether."

"I'm beginning to feel a little that way, anyhow!" said Mr. Shafter. "You know," he mused, "travel is really a great thing—for anybody!"

§ 3

"That nigger's so damn black he looks blue!" whispered the Hon. Hiram to his wife, as they awaited the return of the Senegalese sergeant who had vanished inside a door marked "*Chef d'Etat-Major*" at Military Headquarters in Rabat. For the first time in his placid, uneventful life he was beginning to worry about his wife, she looked so haggard and anxious. She had always been thankful that Robert had been too young to go to the War. And now!—What had ever struck Robert to go to Africa!

Through the open window they could look out into a white-walled garden ablaze with geraniums,

zinias, larkspur, hyacinth, and roses. The room itself was bare, monastic rather than military, as also was the silence, broken only by the muffled clack of a far-distant typewriter somewhere down the corridor. Save for the Moroccan regular on duty at the entrance of the building they had seen no soldiers anywhere.

The Senegalese reappeared, followed by a sandy-haired officer in light blue, holding between his fingers the Hon. Hiram's business card.

"Monsieur Shaftaire?" he inquired.

"That's my name," replied the Hon. Hiram, lumbering to his feet. "—I'd like to have you meet Mrs. Shafter."

The officer bowed.

"I am Col. Steiglitz, assistant chief-of-staff. Will you come inside? The general regrets that he cannot have the pleasure of conversing with you himself, but he is at present engaged in a military conference and does not wish to detain you. Besides, his English is not very good, whereas mine is somewhat better since for five years I was military attaché at our Embassy in Washington."

He led the way into the adjoining room, which differed from that in which they had been sitting only in the fact that it contained a desk, two telephones, and was hung with large-scale maps studded with red and black-headed pins.

"Please!" he indicated two chairs, seated himself behind the desk and took up a bundle of papers held

together by a clip. "You have a son Robert in the *Troisième Etrangère*. He enlisted under age and you wish to have him discharged. *N'est-ce pas?*"

"Correct!" from the Hon. Hiram. "What can you do about it?"

The tiny lines around the officer's eyes wrinkled into a smile.

"Whatever can be done, is done." He tapped the bundle of papers. "This *dossier* contains a copy of the original letter from your State Department to the American Ambassador at Paris asking for the release of your son, your Ambassador's letter to the 'Quai d'Orsay,' and the 'Quai d'Orsay's' *communiqué* to the Ministry of War, as a result of which the Ministry wired us as follows:

"American Ambassador informs us that Robert Shafter, bearer of American passport No. 934,621 is supposed to have enlisted in Foreign Legion under name of 'Mr. Dooley' while under age and without consent of parents. Please investigate boy's whereabouts and report."

"To this we replied:

"Records show American named 'Mr. Dooley' enlisted June 21, 1926 in *Troisième Etrangère* as *Légionnaire Deuxième Classe*, No. 27,841. Awarded *Croix de Guerre* October 18, 1926. Now assigned to *Compagnie Montée 'B'* in *Groupe Mobile* operating in the *Aït Youb* and *Aït Temama* under Major Pechkoff. Communication at present impossible."

"You mean Robert has got the *Croy du Gare?*" demanded Mr. Shafter excitedly.

"You mean you don't know where Robert is?" exclaimed his mother. "Can't you find out?"

Col. Steiglitz made a sympathetic gesture in the direction of Mrs. Shafter.

"We do not know precisely, since the *Groupe Mobile* is operating under general orders. Your son is somewhere sixty or seventy kilometres southeast of Fez in the Middle Atlas. We have telephoned Regional Headquarters at Fez. They will attempt to get in touch with the column through battalion headquarters at Engil, and have your son sent back at the earliest possible moment." Then he turned to Mr. Shafter and smiled. "He was given the Croix de Guerre—for bravery in the attack on Tichkoukt—of which he was the sole survivor."

"We can secure his release then?"

"It would appear from the papers that your government has made a special request for expedition. Your son's birth certificate, forwarded by your State Department to the American Embassy, has been delivered to the 'Quai d'Orsay' and the fact of his enlistment under the age of eighteen having been thus duly established, the Ministry of War has ordered his immediate discharge on proper identification."

"I don't understand!" said Mrs. Shafter, "Who is it that has to be identified?"

"There must be adequate proof that *Légionnaire Deuxième Classe No. 27,841* of the *Troisième Etrangère* is in fact your son Robert. However, that is very simple. The instant our headquarters at Engil

can reach by telephone the *compagnie montée* to which he is attached, he will easily be able to satisfy the officer in command of his identity. In fact, all he will have to say is 'My name is Robert Shafter. I come from Rome, Ohio, United States of America, I was under eighteen years when I enlisted, and I did so without my parents' consent.' "

"But didn't he have to say he was *over* eighteen when they took him in?" asked Mrs. Shafter anxiously.

"He did."

"Then won't that keep them from letting him out?"

"It might—under different circumstances. It would appear, however, that special consideration is being given to your son's case. In fact—while we are sorry to lose a good soldier—the order for his release, subject to his identification, has already been signed."

The Hon. Hiram expanded his chest.

"Ha!" he said. "What'd I tell you, Mattie? I thought my being chairman of the county committee would mean something."

"How long will all that take?" asked Mrs. Shafter.

"Two or three weeks, probably. You will find Rabat a pleasant place to stay in. The Resident General will no doubt be able to arrange to have you presented to the Sultan——"

"I can't hang around meeting Sultans while my boy is in danger!" declared Mrs. Shafter. "I want to get just as near to him as I can. If he's only sixty

kilometres from Fez, why can't we go and identify him ourselves?"

"You can hardly be allowed to go inside the fighting lines," expostulated Col. Steiglitz. "I advise you to stay comfortably where you are——"

"How far is it to Fez?"

"About a hundred and fifty kilometres."

"Why, that's nothing at all! How far is it to that other place you spoke of—the battalion headquarters?"

"Engil?—Eighty or ninety more."

"I don't see why, if we started right off now, we couldn't get there by to-night," she insisted.

Col. Steiglitz shrugged his shoulders.

"You forget, Madam, that this country is at war, and that fighting is going on at this moment not very far from Fez. As for your going into the Atlas to look for your son, it would be not only dangerous, but practically impossible. The roads are nothing but tracks,—*pistes*, as we call them,—unfit for automobiles——"

"Couldn't I ride on a mule?"

Before Col. Steiglitz could reply a young officer entered and, saluting, handed him a despatch. The assistant chief of staff perused it and frowned, then arose and slightly readjusted the line of red and black-headed pins on the wall-map.

"The Berbers have just surrounded a group of outposts near Talzent," he informed her. "If you insist on going as far as Fez it can perhaps be arranged.

There is an excellent hotel there—the Palais Djamai—run by the 'Transat.' As for going farther, it would be, if you will pardon my saying so, quite ridiculous."

Mr. and Mrs. Shafter exchanged glances.

"Well, if you'll fix it so's we can go to Fez, we shall be much obliged," said the Hon. Hiram. "And I think, if it wouldn't be too much trouble, that we'd like to go as soon as possible."

"Very well. I will see what can be done. But you will have to wait over in Rabat at least until to-morrow morning. There is, however, one trifling matter to be attended to first. You must return the five hundred francs bonus represented by your son's *prime d'engagement*. Will you do it now? If so, I will prepare a receipt."

Opening a writing-tablet Col. Steiglitz selected a sheet of paper and wrote out a receipt for the five hundred francs. This he signed, powdering it carefully with sand, which he afterward poured back into its receptacle. During the proceeding he was interrupted once more upon the telephone and made another rearrangement of the battle-front.

"*Voilà!*" he said, arising and handing the papers to Mr. Shafter in exchange for five one hundred franc notes. "I trust that everything will be arranged to your satisfaction. Au revoir, *Monsieur et Madame!* I hope you will soon have news of your son!"

Mr. and Mrs. Shafter passed the guard on duty at the entrance, out into the hot, white sunlight. There

was a faint scent of geraniums and of roses in the air.

"By George! These French are a wonderful people!" exclaimed the Hon. Hiram pocketing the paper. "Think of that bozo taking the time to give me a receipt for five hundred francs while there was so much going on. Only twenty dollars in real money, at that! Steiglitz don't sound so awful French, does it?"

"Not very!" she agreed. "Maybe there are all sorts of Frenchmen, just like there are all kinds of Americans. Anyhow he was very polite. They really seem to want to help us all they can to find Robert! I only wish they knew where he was."

"I guess we can consider ourselves lucky he's alive at all!" declared her husband.

"How do we know that he is?" she sighed. "He may be killed any minute!"

The Hon. Hiram put his arm about her.

"Cheer up, Mattie!" he urged with a greater tenderness than he had exhibited toward her for many years. "I guess if the good Lord has looked out for Robert all this time, he'll keep on for a while longer, until you can get to him.—Anyhow, don't forget that no matter what happens, he's got the Croy du Gare!"

They spent the afternoon at Chella, visiting the Tomb of the Black Sultan, which they found to be all that Lieut. Burbank had promised, and were off at daybreak next morning, leaving behind them the

boom of the breakers and the thin gray haze of the coast for the whiter light and bluer sky of the interior.

Traversing first the vast cork forests of Mamora they soon emerged upon the well-tilled uplands of the Zemmour, sprinkled with the *nourwals* and black tents of the nomads, crossed the reddish-yellow gorge of the Oued Beht, and climbed over the hills to Meknes by the skilfully engineered road paralleling the "*Trik es Soltane*," or Imperial Highway, which led in ancient times from Algeria to Morocco. To the north, at seemingly no great distance, floated the purple Zernoun range shadowed by patches of soft cloud; while against the background of the southern sky the Middle Atlas, toward which the plain lifted itself in blood-red terraces, stretched its white tents.

"Can all that be just red earth?" asked Mr. Shafter.

"What you see are millions of poppies and red daisies," explained Lieut. Burbank. "Wonderful, isn't it? I couldn't believe it at first! Looks like a brilliantly colored rug!"

Soon the fourteen towers of Meknes, the ancient capitol of Moulay-Ismaïl, swam into view, and, presently, the giant horseshoe of the Bab Mansour, an entrance worthy of the barbaric splendor of the great Sultan, the most dramatic figure in Moroccan history.

The Shafters were staggered at its proportions; amazed at the exquisite beauty of its green, black and gold tiling.

"Makes those folks walking through look like crawling insects, don't it!" averred the Hon. Hiram.

"You've read about Moulay-Ismaïl, of course," commented the Lieutenant. "He was the lad who built a stable for twelve thousand horses and wanted to marry the daughter of Louis Fourteenth. There's plenty to see here if one has the time, especially in the third month of the Mohammedan year,—the one the Prophet was born in,—when fifty thousand Aissaouas from all over Africa go through all kinds of savage rites in honor of their saint. They stab themselves with knives, and swallow glass and live scorpions and cactus thorns. I've seen 'em tear out the entrails of live sheep with their teeth. Sometimes you find fifteen or twenty dead fanatics lying about the saint's tomb next day."

They crept at snail's pace through the swarming streets of Meknes and sped on toward Fez, leaving unvisited the ruins of the Roman City of Volubilis, whose Arch of Triumph, erected in honor of Caracalla, was clearly visible from the road, and, on its hill, the beautiful city of Moulay Idris where the Hamadchas held their bloody ceremonials each year.

The rose tints on the Atlas were deepening to purple as the crenellated walls of Fez rose across the tawny plain dotted with thousands of small brown tents. For the first time they found themselves in contact with military activity. Long lines of picketed horses marked the presence of the Spahis, and hundreds of Moroccan regulars were gathered about

the cooking-fires, while beyond they could see battery upon battery of guns. Skirting the outer line of walls, past open spaces lined with squatting Arabs and swarming with heavily burdened donkeys, they paused at the edge of the plateau where the old city, Fez Elbali, tumbles like an arrested cataract of white roofs, broken by jutting green promontories of fig, cypress and ilyx, over the sluice-way formed by the ravine of the Oued Fez.

Beyond the white sea of roof-tops, terraces and towers, domes and minarets, straggled low hills crowned by rambling fortifications and dotted with tombs and sagging grave-stones. Directly below rose the tall minaret of the Almohad Mosque of El Kairouiyin, its top gilded by the last rays of the sun. From this point the road descended precipitously in many curves but, before reaching the level of the lower valley, turned aside into a small natural amphitheatre, and they found themselves confronted abruptly by a high wall, perforated by an archway too narrow for the motor to enter. A group of Arabs loitered beside it.

"Here we are," Burbank informed them. "This is the Bab Guissa,—the entrance to your hotel."

§ 4

Nancy Vernon stood on the roof of the Palais Djamai waiting for the sunset gun to send the white flag fluttering down on the minaret of the Kairouiyin

Mosque. Behind her, a hundred yards away on the platform of the minaret of the Mosque of the Bab Guissa, stood a muezzin watching for the same signal to add his voice to the chorus which would call the Faithful to their prayers.

On the flat adjacent roofs the cloistered women of the harems, attended by their negresses, had come out to get their daily breath of fresh air and, perhaps incidentally, to gossip with one another across the parapets; while here and there a couple of children or young girls tossed a ball with excited outcries. Against the ash-gray of the terraced roofs their bright dresses made agreeable spots of color. At this hour, and only at this hour, were the women allowed to be unveiled. Nancy, through the courtesy of the wife of a French officer, had been received in some of the harems and had there met women who, save to cross from one house to another on their wedding days, had never been outdoors in their entire lives. In less distinguished households the women, if closely veiled, were allowed to go at dusk during Ramadan to pray at the tomb of a *marabout*, but in the higher classes they were prisoners the year round.

She had expected something languishing and seductive, at least coquettish, about these ladies of the harem, and had been disappointed to find that for the most part they were as dignified, and obviously quite as respectable, as New England spinsters. Pasty-faced, amiable but apathetic, their eventless lives were without occupation or interest, save for

the sensual whims of one bloated male with fat hands, pursy cheeks, and features almost as womanish as their own.

Although the sky was still blue above the gardens of Fez Eidjid, oil lanterns twinkled in the black crevices of the streets of the lower town. Immediately below her the terraces of the Palais Djamai descended one after the other, by flights of tiled steps, from garden to garden, past splashing fountains, to the arched alley leading to the *souks*. The Palais Djamai had originally been the palace of the vizier of Sultan Adb El Aziz, and when it had been bought for a hotel, since half a dozen of the vizier's ladies were still living there, the "Transat" had been obliged to assume the obligation of their support. Nancy's own bedroom had been that of "the favorite." It opened off a steep, winding and narrow staircase, and its mosaic arches overlooked a little court containing a tiny fountain. Confined in that cell-like room for life, the poor girl's greatest excitement had been a twilight climb to the roof. Nancy had never appreciated her life at home so much as she had here in Fez after meeting these Moroccan women.

A hush had descended upon the roof tops. Everybody was watching the white flag on the minaret of the Kairouiyin. Throughout Fez Elbali echoed the mysterious trumpetings that had kept her awake those many nights at Marrakech. An Arab climbed up the staircase behind her carrying a long wooden horn which he thrust over the parapet and com-

menced to blow. Its mournful boom was echoed by the sunset gun, the white flag fluttered, from every mosque came the call to prayer, and a rustle, that became a roar, rose from the city as it awoke to break its fast.

At that instant Nancy noticed crossing the terrace directly below her a file of Arab porters, followed by a lady and a gentleman in a black bowler hat. Although vaguely conscious of something familiar in their appearance, she did not, foreshortened as they were, recognize the Shafers until she saw her mother arise from her tea-table on the terrace and deliriously hail them.

"Why, Mattie Shafter!"

"Well, if it ain't Carrie Vernon!" floated up to Nancy in the well-known tones of the Hon. Hiram. "What you doin' out here, Carrie?"

Nancy's heart gave a spasmodic jump and a thousand tiny prickles raced over her shoulders. There could be only one reason for the Shafers being in Africa. Could Robert be here, too? Perhaps even in Fez! Then her pulse stopped. Could he be dead, and his parents have come to take home his body?—No, death did not lurk in the jovial greeting that Mr. Shafter had given to her mother. Swiftly she raced down the narrow, twisting stairs, formerly trodden only by the former vizier's favorites, and joined the group on the terrace.

"O, Nancy, dear! It's just too lovely to see you again." Mrs. Shafter tearfully embraced her. "I was

just telling your mother! Robert is in the Foreign Legion! You know how romantic he always was! He's somewhere in the mountains near here! We don't know exactly where, but we've got an order from the French Government for his discharge, and we're going to get him out as soon as we can and take him home. Wouldn't it be too awful, if we couldn't find him! Or suppose he should be sick or wounded! He might be, even yet, before we are able to reach him!"

"He's got the Croy du Gare, too!" boasted the Hon. Hiram.

"Isn't it all too wonderful! And what do you think! We found out about it from a nigger song-and-dance man in a minstrel show down at the Star Theatre in Rome!" said Mrs. Shafter. "He'd had the most extraordinary adventures!"

Nancy's eyes widened.

"You don't mean 'Al Jolson'?"

"I think that was what he said he'd called himself.—Why, Nancy! You don't mean that you were the American girl who helped him to escape!"

"It must have been the very same man!" exclaimed Nancy. "Had he been blown up in an attack on a fort——"

"And disguised himself as an Arab?" interjected Mrs. Shafter.

"—And pretended he was a holy man?" added her husband.

"—And joined a caravan of nomads?" completed Nancy.

"Well of all things! God certainly does move in a mysterious way!" sighed Mrs. Shafter.

"He never said one word about Robert! Of course I never imagined!"

"Why should you!" commented his mother. "Who would have? Nobody had any idea Robert had run off to Africa.—Anyhow, if you hadn't helped that poor man, none of us would know where Robert was, even now!"

They stood leaning over the marble balustrade, looking down upon the tangle of foliage from which arose the warble of birds and the murmur of a half-hidden fountain. The muezzin had ceased his chant and had descended from the minaret, but above the clatter of voices from the invisible arteries of the city came the weird calling of the horns,—“Bo-om!—Bo-om!—Bo-o-m!”

"What's that funny noise?" inquired the Hon. Hiram. "Sounds like a sick cow."

"Those are the horns of Ramadan," answered Nancy, recalling the words of Mohammed Abu Mandril. "They blow them to wake people up."

"At this hour?"

"Yes, to call them to prayer. You see, they've been asleep most of the day."

"I thought I heard the same kind of bellowing down at Rabat in the middle of the night," he said.

"Very likely you did. They also blow them about

an hour before sunrise to wake the sleepers, so that they can eat before the fast begins."

M. Bluet, the manager of the "Transat," who seemed to know all about the Shafers, assigned them the room formerly occupied by the Vizier upon the top floor of the Palais Djamai, explaining that, since the transfer of ownership in the palace, a bathroom had been added to the suite. He also presented a letter from General de Chambrun, in which the latter stated that he would be glad to see the Shafers at his office next morning at ten o'clock.

"Seems a long way from home, doesn't it, Mattie!" drowsed the Hon. Hiram, as three hours later he stretched himself out luxuriously on the ex-vizier's personal sleeping-divan. "D'y'know, this has been quite an experience!—Funny how things work out sometimes, isn't it? Just to think! Less'n a year ago Robert was moonin' around playin' that ukelele of his, an' we hardly knew Morocco existed!"

"There was a lot of other things we didn't know either!" she innocently reminded him.

"That's right, too!" he yawned as he turned over. "I hope those darned horns won't keep me awake!"

"I hope something will!" she commented mentally. "Good night, Hiram."—Then clasping her hands she prayed: "O, God! Give me back my boy!"

XIV

AT the moment that Mr. and Mrs. Shafter had been threading the lane leading from the Bab Guissa to the upper terrace of the Palais Djamai, their son Robert, rifle in hand, was crouched behind a pile of rocks on a ridge of the Middle Atlas seventy kilometres to the southeast of Fez. The same ray of the setting sun that, half hidden in a bank of rose-gray cloud, gilded the minarets of the city, also sprayed with gold the walls of a fort on the opposite crest half a mile away. The *Groupe Mobile* had been ordered to relieve the besieged outpost of Azu, above Talzent and, the relief having been accomplished earlier in the day, the *compagnie montée* was now engaged in covering the "décrochage," or "unhooking," of the last of the besieged to leave the fort. The fighting had been severe, for the outpost had been thoroughly invested by the Berbers, and the garrison had had no food or water for several days.

While the evacuation was going on the *compagnie montée* had established itself on the ridge immediately to the west, to prevent the Berbers returning from behind the mountains and outflanking the relieving column. From where Robert lay he could see hundreds of men and mules descending into the valley below toward the stream which paralleled the mountains cutting the plain in two. Only when all were safely across and the battalion had been com-

pletely "unhooked," might the *compagnie montée* leave its position and, still acting as a rear guard, follow on.

As the French had foreseen, with the breaking of spring both Abd-El-Krim and Sidi Rabo had taken the warpath with renewed vigor. The season was an early one and the weather unusually warm. The Berbers, gradually driven back during the winter, had concentrated in the Zeggout country, northeast of Talzent. They had gathered in force around the outer line of blockhouses, and having isolated them, had occupied the higher ridges to prevent the further advance of the French, and were now clearly prepared for a heavy and obstinate resistance.

Robert had long since entirely recovered from his experience at Tichkoukt, but in spite of being in good health he was thoroughly sick of the legionnaire's life. His service at Colomb Bochar and Bou Kem Kem the preceding autumn had convinced him of his suicidal error in enlisting, and from the time of his return to the battalion at Taghzout he had sought means of securing his release. He often wondered as to the state of mind under the influence of which he could have committed himself to voluntary servitude for five years! There was absolutely no way of getting out, short of being so disabled as to be unfit for service! He had been under age when he had enlisted, but, since he had signed a statement to the effect that he was over eighteen, he was estopped from making the claim; and in any event, should he

advance it, he would be inviting trouble. There was nothing for him to do, but to make the best of it. Anyhow the mountains were better than the steaming barracks of the desert stations. Here you might freeze or starve or die of exhaustion, but the air was fresh and clear. And for the most part he was too busy to think at all.

Certainly that day he had had no time to think! He had been under fire continuously since four o'clock that morning. During the night the Berbers had approached the camp in the darkness and killed several sentries, the *compagnie* had been twice ordered to arms, while a machine-gun on a near-by peak had kept them awake with its never-ending "rat-a-tat-tat."

As he lay there peering across the amphitheatre up the sides of which the blue-black line of night was steadily creeping, Robert experienced an unutterable disgust for the whole business of war. What difference did it make who possessed those arid peaks? Were they worth the life of a single gallant legionnaire? Every nerve and muscle clamored in agony. He had had no water since before noon, and his throat ached as if struck by a blow whenever he tried to swallow. The leaden ballast in his skull drew his head forward whenever he surrendered to the pain in his neck. His bones felt as if they had been broken and split up for kindling. The skin on his face and hands was dry and scaly, caked with mud, in places cracked to the raw; the soles of his

feet were a quivering pulp that burned at every step. Added to a weariness that made it seem impossible that he could ever again get up, his entire being was pervaded with a hunger that, at times, gnawed and scratched like a cancer and, at others, dragged down his belly as if it were filled with stones. But he did not care. He was too weary to feel that anything mattered. Yet he was fully aware of the danger of their position.

In an hour it would be dark; everybody must be across the river by that time; yet several ridges and ravines intervened, and there was no time to be lost. He knew that as soon as the shadow had swallowed up the hillside opposite it would swarm with white dots, like ants where a stone had been overturned. The fort had already been blown up and the mules and men were scrambling down the mountainside as fast as they could toward the river, beyond which lay comparative safety. He could see moving around the remains of the fort bunches of white and gray burnouses which increased every minute in number. Retreat was going to be difficult, for the *compagnie montée*, thus left alone, had no one to rely on but itself, and must form its own flank and rear guard.

The lieutenant with his field-glasses was watching the troops assembling to cross the river. The actual "*décrochage*" had so far been successful; it only remained for Robert's own company, the isolated rear guard, now heavily outnumbered by the Berbers on the surrounding heights, to make its getaway. This

would be largely a question of speed,—a race as to who should first reach the river. On that precipitous and abrupt mountainside, descent for the wounded and the mules with the machine-guns would be difficult and slow, and for that reason they had been ordered on ahead. Measuring with his eye first the distance to the river and then to the abandoned outpost it occurred to Robert that the lieutenant had waited too long.

Already the shadow of the ridge upon which they lay had slipped up the mountainside and vanished into the darkening blue overhead. It was beginning to be very cold. The Berbers were working along the ridge in both directions, their burnouses showing white against the rocks and among the grayness of the oak groves lower down. The main body of troops was now almost across the river.

Robert shivered as he watched the lieutenant calmly replace his binoculars in their case and lift his whistle. What if he had waited too long? What difference did it make whether one were killed now or a few months from now? Death was a part of the legionnaire's programme. In four cases out of five it came, at one time or another, before the termination of service. It was surprising how little he had come to think of it! If he ever got away from the Atlas nothing would seem really arduous or dangerous again. But there was small likelihood that he would get away from it. What was to prevent one of those fellows over there in their dirty gray burnouses

from putting a bullet through him within the next five minutes? A rotten ending:—to have your naked body stripped of its clothes by the Berbers, and picked to pieces by the buzzards. And yet, if he came through, he wasn't so sure after all that he'd be sorry he had enlisted. He'd got something out of it! He knew that he was an entirely different Robert Shafter from the ukelele-playing moon-calf who had hung around singing those sentimental songs.

“We're poor little lambs who've lost our way,
Baa! Baa! Baa!”

Back in Ohio the spring would just be breaking, and Bellevue Avenue would be white with dogwoods and magnolias. If only for one instant he could bury his face in the soft green turf of the front yard, smell the scent of the apple-blossoms behind the house! He'd been away nearly a year! It seemed ten at the very least! Did Nancy ever think of him? Her photograph, now hardly recognizable, was still in his pocket. What a fool he had been to run away! If he ever got back to Fez he'd try to beat it—somehow!—Gosh, he was tired! Would he ever be able to get up again?

The whistle!

Robert seized his rifle and staggered stiffly to his feet along with the others. Below the abutment of rocks where they had been lying, the hill plunged down abruptly in a long, steep slope of slippery red slag, loose shale and mud, streaked yellow by moun-

tain torrents, until it reached a sparse growth of scrub merging gradually into the oak groves above the stream. Once they had started to descend it would be hard to stop,—almost as hard as if you were being kicked off a roof by some one over your head. The ravine was now a bowl of purple shadow, rimmed with black hillsides, behind which far to the southeast the mountain-wall of the Atlas rose tier on tier into the pink after-glow.

Now that they were moving again he no longer felt cold and soon began to sweat. The men, unencumbered by knapsack or blanket, clambered quickly down along the muddy paths made by the sheep and goats, which up to a few days before had been pastured there. Robert, with about twenty others forming the rear guard, was the last to begin the descent. Another twenty minutes and they would be on the other bank of the river. In the dusk he could hardly make out the forms of his comrades, the color of whose khaki uniforms was lost in that of the dun rocks, but he could hear them slipping and cursing as the stones rolled from under their feet or a dropped rifle clattered.

The main body of the *compagnie* had traversed the open slope and had reached the first fringe of oaks when a terrific fire broke out on both sides and behind them. The Berbers had only delayed the attack long enough to make it impossible for them to regain their position on the ridge. The amphitheatre smoked: the encircling hillside spat fire. Several

legionnaires fell, some killed outright, others badly wounded. Robert could see the white burnouses of the Berbers against the gray rocks as they came leaping and yelling down the mountainside. The flankers and rear guard returned the fire, halting and then retreating again, while the column hurried on carrying the wounded upon their backs. To stop was out of the question. Firing had even commenced from the edges of the groves, less than a hundred yards distant. The enemy had now emerged from the rocks and were advancing in a dense white semicircle on three sides.

The sergeant in command ordered the three squads composing the rear guard to lie down. These, with bayonets fixed, awaited the approach of the Berbers who, in their excitement over having, as they supposed, lured the *compagnie* into a retreating engagement, were in hot pursuit. Robert, prone on his stomach, trained his rifle on the waving wall of white, which each instant became more and more distinct. Now he could see their faces, their eyes,—could hear them panting,—a murderous-looking lot! His finger itched for the trigger. Where was the whistle? They were just above him—not four yards away!

The whistle gave its scream. Robert fired point-blank at a tall Berber who was waving his arms directly in front of his bayonet point. The man spun, and pitched forward. He fired again. The onrushing roller of white wavered, its crest toppled. The Berbers, astonished at this unexpected resistance, broke,

and scattered toward the rocks, but before Robert and the others had gone many paces in pursuit the bugle sounded "Halt and retreat!" and the men were reluctantly compelled to desist. Two had been severely wounded, and one of these Robert took upon his back. The poor fellow's bloody head hung over his shoulder and lolled against the boy's cheek. Soon they reached the cover of the oaks. The Berbers having recovered themselves had taken up the pursuit again, trying to head off the column by hurrying along the edges of the ravine so as to reach the river first.

Robert, lagging behind under the heavy weight upon his shoulders, knew that they would never get there before the Berbers. It was going to be a close call—even if they made it. The wounded legionnaire was like a sack of wheat bowing him to the ground. He did not know whether the man were alive or dead, but at any cost he must resolve all doubts in his comrade's favor.

The ground began to slope off more rapidly and he realized that they must be approaching the banks of the stream. At that moment a ripping rifle-fire sounded from the front. It had been almost dark in the woods, and quite impossible to know what was going on; now as they emerged into daylight again Robert could see the main body of the *compagnie* already assembled on the bank of the river waiting for the rear guard to catch up with them before attempting the crossing. Some of the men were al-

ready in the water and a short distance up-stream the Berbers were starting to cross also.

The firing was getting hotter every instant on both flanks. Robert, completely exhausted, surrendered the wounded man on his back to another legionnaire, and tottered down to the river-bank. The Berbers were running out of the woods both above and below and wading into the stream. There was nothing for it but to try to cross, since otherwise they were entirely hemmed in. Carrying the wounded on their backs, the men plunged into the ice-cold water, which soon reached to their waists, then to their arm-pits. Robert, holding his rifle above his head, with bullets whinnying about his ears and ricochetting along the water, had no expectation of reaching the other bank alive. Dense masses of Berbers were pouring out of the woods into the stream, seeking to gain the other side and surround the French before they could climb up the opposite bank. Almost naked and without equipment they could easily outdistance them.

Major Pechkoff stood in a shallow spot in the middle of the river directing the crossing. Although he was inviting almost certain death he showed no concern as coveys of bullets slapped the water about him. Robert was filled with admiration for his bravery! They were all now—legionnaires and *indigènes* alike—in mid-stream. The current was swift—! It was hopeless to try to cross the river before the Berbers! They must fight where they were. The commander blew his whistle.

"Fire!"

The men, gripping the muddy bottom with their feet, and leaning up-stream, began firing point-blank. The Berbers, again taken by surprise, hesitated; some started to retrace their steps. Struggling in the current they made a fine target. A few attempted to return the fire, but these were immediately picked off. Robert waded to the sand-spit and took his stand beside Major Pechkoff. The air resounded with yells and screams. The current sweeping between their legs showed streaks of red. Bodies immersed in huge bubbles of white cloth began floating by. But the rifle-fire, although effective in stopping the Berbers near at hand, did not avail to deter the passage of the gray ghosts almost invisible in the twilight farther up-stream.

Major Pechkoff, perceiving that in a minute or two they would be subjected to a direct fire from the shore which they were attempting to reach, gave the order to cease firing and complete the crossing. At the same instant he sagged to his knees with a bullet in his thigh. Robert lifted him across his left shoulder and, holding him tight with one arm, floundered toward the opposite shore. The river was full of wounded, thrashing about in the shallows and calling upon Allah.

He reached the bank first and, placing the officer upon it, scrambled up. A group of white figures fluttered screaming out of the darkness and ran toward him. He hurled his last grenade into their midst,

but it did not explode. Well—damn them! He raised his rifle and shot the first oncomer. At that moment he seemed to hear close by the rattle of machine-guns. Too late! Then, as they overwhelmed him, he bayoneted another, before he fell.

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He awoke, as he thought, in another sphere. Through an opaqueness like cotton wool, a voice said somewhere above him:

“He’s coming out of it. You can send him down to Talzent by *mulet de caccolet* with the convoy this afternoon.”

A pungent odor of ether filled his nostrils. He seemed to be full of it, somehow. It was sickly sweet and immediately, even before he had opened his eyes, he was violently ill. Once this was over he became aware that he was in an open hospital-tent, that the sun was shining, that his leg was stiff and tightly bandaged, and that his head had suddenly swollen to the size of a football. From outside, through the smell of antiseptics, floated the aroma of coffee, the odor of fresh mule-dung, and gunpowder. His head ached unbelievably. An orderly came up with a smoking cup of black coffee.

“This will pull you together,” he said. “You had a close shave.”

Robert drank the coffee and immediately felt better.

“How is the commander?” he asked.

"He will recover."

"And the rest of the *compagnie montée*?"

"The machine-guns went back and helped them across the river.—Eleven casualties only."

What luck! Perhaps he was wounded badly enough to get his discharge.

"This leg?" he suggested. "Will it have to come off?"

The orderly stared at him.

"'Come off'? Are you crazy? It's only a little bullet-hole. We had to probe, otherwise you'd be feeling all right. You'll be on duty in a fortnight."

"Gosh!" groaned Robert. "Now what do you think of that!"

XV

THE morning after their arrival in Fez, a military touring-car, with two Moroccan regulars upon the front seat, whirled the Shafters from the Bab Guissa back up the hill, past the sentries at the gate of the upper town, and down through a labyrinth of walled streets to the offices of the Etat-Major, where they were received by Col. Buchsenschutz, the regional chief of staff, and conducted immediately into the presence of General de Chambrun. The room was small, the walls entirely covered by large-scale maps, the cheap pine table at which he sat, bare save for a couple of telephones.

"So you want to go up to the front," said the general, greeting them genially in English. "Well, I know how you must feel about wanting to see your son as soon as possible, but really you would do much better to stay here until he can be located and sent down. The country is very rough, the roads are execrable, and the accommodations primitive. In fact, even if I should let you go on to Boulmane or Engil, there would be no place for you to stay except the *Bureau de Renseignements*, which is hardly more comfortable than an American lumber camp. The only proper way to go is by airplane. Take my advice and see what there is to see in Fez. Madame de Chambrun, my wife,—she's an American, you know, the sister of Mr. Nicholas Longworth, the

Speaker of your House of Representatives,—will be delighted to entertain you,—and I'll get the boy down for you in ten days or two weeks by convoy.—Don't you think that the wisest plan?"

Mrs. Shafter shook her head.

"No," she answered firmly. "I don't want to wait two weeks. I want to go right on as far as I can, and be there to meet him when he comes back."

The general looked at her and smiled. There was something about this simple, homespun mother from his wife's native state that aroused his admiration.

"Very well," he said. "I'll do the best I can for you.—*Buchsenschutz!*" he called in French. "Send Monsieur and Madame Shafter up to Engil by auto. And have Captain Truchet go along with them as interpreter. He has lived in the States and talks English like a Yankee. You will need two cars." Then to Mrs. Shafter: "When do you wish to start?"

"Right away."

"That is impossible, Madame. Although the distance to Engil is less than one hundred kilometres, the condition of the roads makes it a long trip,—ten hours at least. It is better that you should start to-morrow morning. If we hear anything of your son meanwhile, I will let you know."

He got up and extended his hand to both of them.

"This is rather an unusual proceeding," he said, "but it is an unusual case. My wife had a cable from her brother, Mr. Longworth, shortly after you visited him in Washington, followed by a letter. He says that you are friends of his—from the same State.

Since you will not be leaving Fez until to-morrow, I hope you will give us the pleasure of dining with us this evening."

§ 2

"But I can't let you go way off into those mountains without me!" declared her mother when Nancy announced later on in the afternoon that, having been invited by the Shafers, she too wished to go to Engil. "And I certainly have no intention of trusting myself to a couple of negro soldiers, with fighting going on everywhere. Suppose we should be kidnapped and held for ransom?"

"There's not the slightest possibility of being kidnapped!" answered Nancy. "The only difficulty is with the roads, and by this time we ought to be used to those! It's not more than a day's run to Engil. And we shan't be going anywhere near the firing-lines. Please let me go, Mother!"

Mrs. Vernon tapped her foot on the stone terrace. Robert's original disappearance had been rather a relief to her. A boy and girl romance had been all well enough, but—marriage—! She had hoped that her daughter would marry somebody more *chic* than the son of the president of a small savings bank—one of those smart French officers they had met at Marrakech, for instance. She was glad on the Shafers' account that Robert had been found, but that Nancy should go rushing off into the mountains to meet him did not fit her plans at all.

"How do you know they would have room for you?" she temporized.

"O, there will be plenty! General de Chambrun is sending two cars."

"But he didn't ask you! I don't see how you can invite yourself!"

"Mr. Shafter telephoned him this afternoon and the general said he would be charmed to have me go," returned the girl.

They were having tea under a marquee outside the Palais Djamaï, after a day spent among the *souks*. Mrs. Vernon, who was fatigued, replaced her cup somewhat tartly upon the iron table.

"I don't seem to have been consulted at all!" she remarked. "I think it would have been more fitting if you had asked me in the first place."

"It never occurred to me that you would have the slightest objection. In fact I thought you'd like me to go. It will be much more comfortable for Mrs. Shafter if she has another woman with her."

Mrs. Vernon, seeing that there was no other way out of it, took the bull by the horns.

"It puts your relationship on such an intimate basis! I should think you could wait to see him until he got back, without rushing off into the fighting zone."

"But I haven't seen him for a whole year!"

"That's not your fault!" replied her mother with the air of having made a point. Nancy leaned forward.

"But it *is*, Mother!"

"How do you mean?"

"It is my fault that I haven't—that nobody has seen him for a whole year."

Mrs. Vernon experienced a sudden misgiving. Could Nancy have already mortgaged her future in some way that she knew nothing about? Robert was nothing but a boy,—little more, in fact, than a child. Why, she could remember perfectly well when he was playing around the Mall in white dresses and button drawers! Still—what could Nancy mean? She looked at her suspiciously.

"I don't see what you could have had to do with it. He just ran away."

"He went away because I broke our—engagement." Nancy brought out the word with something of an effort.

"Engagement!" Mrs. Vernon, in spite of her weariness and the intense heat, stiffened as if a high voltage current had been unexpectedly turned through her body. "What nonsense! You were entirely too young to be engaged to anybody and so was he. Why, he hadn't even gone to college! I don't believe he could have got in! In fact I remember now that he flunked.—Engagement!"

"He had a right to regard it as one. It amounted to the same thing. He knew that I loved him."

Mrs. Vernon winced.

"Then why did you break it?" she inquired.

Nancy calmly returned her mother's gaze.

"Because I was a silly fool," she answered quietly.

"I'd spent the winter away from home and had my

head filled with all sorts of stupid ideas. I thought I was entirely too good for Rome. I must say, Mother, you did quite a lot to encourage it! Anyhow my head was badly turned. I was ashamed of my home town. It wasn't really that I didn't love Robert any more; I just wanted to show him how fine I was—and how popular. I wanted to make him jealous, I guess. And I did! We quarrelled the night of the party and I pretended that I never understood that we were engaged. Of course I was lying and he knew it. Anyhow he just walked off and left me. When I found he'd run away I realized what I'd done and was terribly unhappy. I've been miserable ever since. The more I've travelled and the more people I've seen, the more I've realized what a wonderful person he is and how much I love him. If anything should happen to Robert, I should die. That's why I want to get to him, Mother. And as soon as I can! Now, will you let me go?"

Already the shadows had fallen across the sea of roofs. From just above their heads came the mournful booming of the horns,—the "horns of Ramadan"—calling the sleepers to awake.

"We-ll!" said Mrs. Vernon regretfully at length, "I suppose—in that case—if you insist—you'll have to!"

§ 3

All next day the two cars containing the Shafter party,—now augmented by Nancy,—had wallowed

and ground their way through the soft clay roads toward Engil. The transition from the heat of Fez to the cold air of the mountains had been a violent one. Even at the early hour of their start the terraces of the Palais Djamai had reflected a blinding incandescence against which the huge red umbrellas had offered small relief. But once beyond Sefrou they quickly found themselves climbing into a region where patches of snow, seemingly but a few hundred feet above them, still lay upon the surrounding ridges, and the green fields and walnut groves of the valleys were replaced by barren hills showing as yet no sign of spring.

The transition in the character of the inhabitants was no less striking. In Fez they had climbed through dark tunnel-like alleys in the shadow of dank walls, with only a crack of blue overhead, to emerge through unexpected arches into sun-drenched squares with green-tiled fountains and bazaars rich in red and gold embroidered leather, gay parti-colored silks, rugs and potteries, or had fought the never-ending human rivers of porters, beggars, negroes, Jews and mounted dignitaries of the Makhzen in the reed-thatched *souks*. Here, in the uplands, they passed no one except an occasional lean wayfarer, a road-gang, a column of Moroccan regulars or Senegalese, a solitary crone driving before her a tiny ass submerged by an enormous bundle of firewood, or a covey of children who rushed out to stare at them from some mud village.

Each car was driven by a soldier with a guard beside him. Mr. and Mrs. Shafter occupied the first, while Nancy, Capt. Truchet and Lieut. Burbank followed in the second at a distance of about fifty yards. A telephone line with a single wire ran alongside the road, occasionally meandering across country or over the summit of a ridge, to join them again later on. The sun had the same bite as on the coast, but the wind from the mountains was snow-chilled. At times the road became a mere *piste*, at others it rose in skilfully engineered curves with granite or concrete abutments, only to stop short and resume its erstwhile character of a hog-wallow. Frequently there was only just room for a single car on the turns, around which the highway-to-be plunged unexpectedly along overhanging shelves of rock, a thousand feet above the white water of the mountain streams. Yet over it, Captain Truchet told them, all the artillery, all "*les trains équipages*" and supplies were brought.

"It's not so bad. Next year, when it is finished, you will be able to motor from Fez to Saïd ou Mohand's *kasbah* in a couple of hours."

"Saïd ou Mohand? Who is he?" asked Nancy.

"He's the 'Grand Old Man of the Highlands,' Caïd of the Aït Mohand, the *omar*, or military head, of the Aït Tseghouchene and all the neighboring tribes. A tremendous fighter! For a time he was Sidi Raho's right-hand man. We pass by his *kasbah* a little way beyond Boulmane on the way to Engil."

"But he's not fighting now, is he?"

"No, he came in and made his submission to the Sultan four or five months ago after the big scrap at Tichkoukt, where, as you may have heard, the garrison blew up the fort a few moments too soon and annihilated themselves and the relief party, along with about three hundred Berbers, all at the same time. It was only about forty kilometres over there." He pointed eastward across the mountains. "Saïd ou Mohand was blown up with the rest of them and it was more than he could stand. It did not seem to him quite like sport, you see. More like dynamiting trout might seem to us. So he decided to quit—for the time being, anyhow. I don't trust any of them to stay put forever. That is how we got Boulmane and Engil. It shoved the French line—the Blad-el-Makhzen—another fifty kilometres farther south. Perhaps we shall see him as we go by. He's friendly enough."

It soon became apparent that they could not expect to get farther than Boulmane that night, and it was nearly dark when they reached the fortified mud town which served as the battalion headquarters of the *compagnie montée* to which Robert was assigned. It stood on a plateau at the end of a valley surrounded by a circle of yellowish hills spotted with a scrubby growth that Mr. Shafter said reminded him of Arizona. Here the familiar dog-tents of the Moroccans and Senegalese had been replaced by small conical mud huts with steep straw roofs. They were welcomed by the major in command, who apologeti-

cally offered them the hospitality of the *Bureau de Renseignements*, a low, bare, whitewashed building of the most primitive character, where they slept on iron cots with plenty of heavy gray blankets, for the night was cold, shared the officers' frugal mess, and were off again at dawn.

The road followed the shoulder of a ridge of hills bordering an irregular valley perhaps a third of a mile in width, spotted with grass-tufts, thorn, and cacti, beyond which rose the white drapery of the Middle Atlas.

"We are on the old caravan trail from the Sahara to the Mediterranean," explained Capt. Truchet. "That is the reason why Fez has always been such an important centre for both military and commercial reasons. It lies at the point of intersection of the chief routes to the north and south, as well as of those to the east and the west."

The road surface had frozen during the night but, with the warmth of the rising sun which now flooded the plain, it soon thawed and once more became a thick glutinous paste that clung to the wheels of the motors, retarding their progress and frequently compelling them to stop altogether. Nancy began to wonder whether Mrs. Shafter's determination to get as close to the lines as possible were wise. If it were true that they were fighting only a few miles away—! What was to prevent a band of natives from creeping through some hidden ravine and surrounding them? If so, whence could they summon help?

Her eyes swept in vain the barren stony hillsides, the brown, scarred plain for any human being. Not even a single head of livestock was visible.

And then a mile farther up the valley, on a slight elevation, she perceived a fortress-like agglomeration of square mud buildings which seemed to bar their passage to the mountains. They rose in tiers from the road level, each tier forming a wall or possible line of defense, until they culminated in a single rectangular structure with crenellated, whitewashed towers, by or through which apparently the road passed directly.

"The *kasbah* of Saïd ou Mohand," said Lieut. Truchet.

Nearer approach revealed the fact that most of the windows were protected by iron bars, while a high wall with loopholes surrounded the interior enclosure. The valley beyond the outer barriers, which were composed of mud bulwarks and hedges of wicked-looking blue cacti, flattened out into a wide stretch of rich red ploughed-land as level as a polo-field.

"We have made Saïd ou Mohand an offer on that field for an airdrome," said Capt. Truchet, "but so far he is not interested."

They were now close enough to the *kasbah* to see white figures grouped beneath the walls and standing on the roofs.

"I hope the old boy will come out," remarked Burbank. "I'd like to see him."

"You may be sure that if he does not, some one will!" replied Truchet.

From the *kasbah* arose a harsh barking of dogs, while a bevy of bareheaded children, in various degrees of nakedness, appeared at the turn where the road entered the outer walls.

Just at that moment, without warning, the first car, containing Mr. and Mrs. Shafter, sank gently up to its running-boards into a mud-hole. The chauffeur struggled vainly with it for several minutes, and then got out. So did the other occupants. The children came running up, followed by divers of the older inhabitants. Mr. Shafter speculated whether the hole had not been left there on purpose,—a cultivated hole, so to speak. He knew a feller with a pair of horses out in Ohio, he said, who'd made a fat living hauling folks out of a hole he'd made—! The group about the car now swelled to thirty or forty *indigènes*, who pushed and pulled strenuously, but despite their combined efforts it refused to budge.

"Pity we haven't got a tractor!" said Burbank. "There's nothing to do but dig it out. Luckily we've plenty of time. Engil is only twenty kilometres away."

The entire population of the village seemed to be gathering at the roadside, including several fierce-looking men with guns. Others could be seen hastening down the distant hillsides and across the fields. All had vicious daggers stuck in their belts. Some of the natives who had run to the *kasbah* now came back clearing the way for an erect, dignified old man,

in white turban and brown-striped burnoose, riding proudly upon a sleekly-groomed white mule. His feet were bare save for yellow slippers thrust through the stirrups; the mule's saddle-cloth and bridle were trimmed with crimson tassels.

The newcomer reined in opposite Mr. and Mrs. Shafter and raised his right hand in the friendly gesture which is the modern Arab adaptation of the French military salute.

"*Salaam aleikoum!*" he said.

The Hon. Hiram was tremendously impressed with this fine-looking old gentleman, particularly as the latter had obviously selected him, instead of the officers, for his greeting.

"Salam-ee-koom!" he replied, likewise saluting. Then, clasping his hands and shaking them up and down, he nodded violently and added in a flash of inspiration:

"Heap big chief! Good medicine! How come!"

Saïd ou Mohand regarded him gravely, but with obvious friendliness and respect. Captain Truchet hastened to explain the situation in fluent Berber. The crowd was now so great that Mr. and Mrs. Shafter and Nancy had difficulty in keeping their feet. The circumambient atmosphere reeked of the great unwashed. The car was apparently becoming more and more firmly imbedded every moment. The *caïd* raising himself in his stirrups angrily ordered his retainers to fall back. Then he addressed Mr. Shafter in his native tongue.

"The Caïd, Saïd ou Mohand, wishes to know if

you will not honor him by taking tea in his house," translated Captain Truchet. "He gives you his '*mezrag*.' "

"What sort of rag?" asked Mrs. Shafter.

"His '*mezrag*,'—his 'protection.' Once it is given, while you are here he must treat you as well, if not better, than himself, and guarantee you from harm."

"I think a cup of tea would taste very nice!" said Mrs. Shafter. "I should be glad to see the inside of an Arab house. I've no doubt it would be warmer than out here in the wind."

The *caïd* gave a few sharp orders, which set the children scampering toward the *kasbah*, and, kicking his bare heels into the mule's belly, wheeled and clattered after them.

"Saïd ou Mohand was very much interested in your hat," said Captain Truchet. "He had never seen one like it. He asked if it were not a symbol of high office, and whether you were a ruler or, at any rate, a man of great importance."

"I hope you told him I was," dryly replied the Hon. Hiram.

"I did, in effect," answered Captain Truchet. "I said that you, like himself, were a ruler of one of the greatest countries in the world. I did not refer to America because I am quite sure that he has never heard of it, or, if so, that it means nothing to him." Captain Truchet turned to Mrs. Shafter. "Do not make the mistake of taking Saïd ou Mohand for an Arab. In fact he loathes the Arabs."

"I'm glad you told me," said Mrs. Shafter. "I didn't know there was any difference. What is it?"

"The Arabs came from Arabia," answered Captain Truchet. "The Berbers are a mysterious race indigenous to North Africa, and were found here by the earliest Phœnician traders. Nobody knows where they came from. Their origin is lost in ethnologic obscurity."

Captain Truchet became quite eloquent over the Berbers, of whose language and customs he had apparently made a study. They had, he told Nancy, occupied the tract between Egypt and the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Sahara, since the dawn of history. To the Romans they were known as "Numidians," or nomads, although they were less truly nomadic than the Arabs, with whom they had never amalgamated to any great extent. In fact the Berber race had persisted in physical type and temperament, especially in the mountains, to a surprising degree, ever since the stone-age. They were probably, he said, a race closely related to the Egyptians, mingled with a fair-skinned people of European origin, and, although presenting many variations, were distinctly a white race. They were much more vigorous than the Arabs, who tended to decrease in numbers, while the Berbers increased yearly and now numbered more than three-fifths of the population of Algeria and Morocco. This vigorous and irreducible race, while bowing to its various conquerors—Phœnician, Greek, Roman, Vandal, Arab—had never surren-

dered its rugged individuality, and treasured within it, as seeds preserved throughout the centuries in some Coptic vase, the kernels of rebellion ready to sprout whenever properly fertilized. It was this race, with its strong individuality and proud traditions of independence, that was forever stirring up trouble among the unsubdued tribes of the Sultan's unconquered territory.

"They'd be a grand lot, if only you could tame 'em!" interjected Lieut. Burbank. "All they want to do is to fight."

"Yes," agreed Captain Truchet. "They are very independent, including the women, who are rather bold and free in their ways, although regarded as of little importance from the domestic standpoint. A Berber woman can be bought and dismissed at will. She is treated largely as a servant and, unless she becomes the mother of a male child, is often abandoned when too old to work. However, she is a good deal better off than her Arab sister, since she has a voice in public affairs and can inherit and bequeath property. If she bears a son it is a matter of great rejoicing and she gains the right to wear the mark known as the '*Tafzint*' on her forehead."

"Are they pretty?" asked Nancy, as the party, escorted by the major portion of the inhabitants, walked toward the *kasbah*.

"Very often—when young," answered Truchet. "But only when young! They marry at ten, are in their prime at fifteen, are middle-aged at twenty,

and old at twenty-five. A Berber woman of thirty is apt to look fifty."

They had reached the *kasbah* by this time and, preceded by a vanguard of children, climbed up the unpaved alley that led to the gate of the open enclosure in which stood Saïd ou Mohand's dwelling. Here they were received by a couple of men servants with shaven heads and single scalp lock, who conducted them across a sort of barnyard where several donkeys and the white mule were tethered. Hens ran here and there among the manure heaps, and from an adjacent enclosure came the discordant bleating of many lambs. Nancy was conscious of eyes peering out at her from darkened recesses as Saïd ou Mohand, receiving them upon his threshold, led the way across a smaller, inner court, in one corner of which burned an open fire, to a narrow oblong room with whitewashed walls. Around this on three sides ran a divan raised two or three inches above the floor level, covered with long cushions of lamb-skin, still in their original shape, stuffed with wool. A Taza rug of brown and white lay upon the floor, cushions were piled upon the divan, while two grandfather's clocks of rather elaborate design stood silent at one end of the room.

"Keep on your hat!" muttered Burbank.

Saïd ou Mohand seated Mr. Shafter upon his right, with Captain Truchet upon his left, while Mrs. Shafter, Nancy and Burbank found places against the opposite wall. The host clapped his hands and the two

men servants reappeared each staggering under the weight of a huge circular tray of chiselled copper on which stood tea-pots, samovars, a bowl containing an enormous cone of loaf-sugar, an array of tall glasses, and a little wooden hammer of "*buis*," a very hard variety of oak-wood. The tea itself was brought in a white napkin, tied up in a bundle, while another held freshly-cut mint.

Mrs. Shafter and Nancy watched curiously the process of tea-making, as their host untied the bundle, smelled it and, removing a handful or two, smelled it again. Apparently satisfied, he selected the proper quantity and poured it into a pot; next opened the package of mint, rubbed the leaves between his palms, smelled them, and placed them in another. Then, with the aid of the hammer, he knocked off from the sugar-cone several large pieces a couple of inches in diameter and placed them in each pot.

Meanwhile a woman-servant had been fanning the live coals on a brazier on which the tea-kettle was standing. She now, at a sign from her master, filled the tea-pots with boiling water. Nancy sensed that the crucial moment was at hand. Saïd ou Mohand filled several glasses from each pot, tasted them, put them back, tried again, and finally, the mixture being to his taste, filled all the glasses which the woman then passed.

Lieut. Burbank drank with a loud whistling sound,

while Captain Truchet, smacking his lips loudly, complimented their host on his tea's remarkable aroma.

"Tea without the aroma of mint," said he, "is like a *caïd* without servants."

To which Saïd ou Mohand bowed and replied:

"A courageous *caïd* goes alone to battle and needs no bodyguard, and good tea needs no mint for its aroma."

"A good wine needs no bush!" thought Nancy.

The tea, while ultra-sweet, was excellent. Their glasses emptied, Saïd ou Mohand quickly refilled them.

"You must drink three glasses or he'll be insulted," Burbank whispered.

Nancy did not find it hard to dispose of the required number of glasses, especially with the aid of "gazelle horns"—small, crescent-shaped cakes covered with sugar,—but neither she nor any of the others essayed a fourth.

Saïd ou Mohand once more clapped his hands and a barefooted negress entered with a tray of cigarettes. She wore heavy brass rings upon her ankles and in her ears, a strip of blue foulard wound about her head, and her outer skirt was bundled up about her waist and tied with a colored scarf. Through the arched doorway Nancy could see in the court outside a young woman suckling a baby. Her features were small and not unpleasant, but to the trim American

girl she appeared fat and frowsy. The small blue mark in the middle of her forehead showed that she had borne a male child.

Mr. Shafter, who was suspicious of Berber tobacco, taking one of the cherished cigars from the pocket of his waistcoat, offered it to his host, and Saïd ou Mohand, who was not a sufficiently strict religionist to be above smoking, eating meat and drinking a little wine on occasion, received it with appreciation. For some moments the four males smoked in silence. After the lapse of an appropriate interval Saïd ou Mohand addressed the guest of honor.

"The Caid, Saïd ou Mohand," translated Captain Truchet, "desires to know whence you come."

"Rome," replied Mr. Shafter.

Saïd ou Mohand pondered; then his expression brightened; and he nodded.

"Now I understand," he said solemnly. "You are a true Roumi. A long, long time ago, so long that they are almost forgotten, that race of warriors swept over this land. They wore hats like yours, save that they were of brass and of gold. I have never seen a hat black and soft like yours. Neither is it like the little hats worn by the Jews. It is very beautiful. May I be permitted to touch it?"

Mr. Shafter removed his bowler and Saïd ou Mohand examined it in greatest detail. The cabalistic signs stamped in gold inside its roof obviously filled him with awe.

"Made expressly for Walsh & Spratt," it read, "3-5 Central Square, Rome, O.—Dust-proof."

"It is a talisman to keep off evil spirits!" he remarked knowingly to Captain Truchet.

"Yes," replied the Captain solemnly. "It deflects all bullets, spear-thrusts, and the most violent blows from either sword or dagger."

"Softens the gums, allays all pain!" added Burbank.

Saïd ou Mohand gazed upon it hungrily.

"Why don't you give it to him—the label I mean?" suggested Mrs. Shafter. "It won't cost you anything."

"That's an idea, too!" acquiesced her husband. "Hey!" he addressed the erstwhile Lord of the Tseghouchene. "Heap good boy! Gimme back my hat a minute."

Reaching inside the ancient derby he pulled out the label and handed it to his host.

"Keep it!" he said grandly. "It's yours!"

Astonishment and gratitude were depicted upon the noble features of the Caïd Saïd ou Mohand.

"Truly!—Does the great Rumi give me his charm! May the blessing of Allah be upon him! What can I do?"

Saïd ou Mohand arose and bending over the great Rumi kissed him upon both cheeks, while the Hon. Hiram, unable to think of anything else to do, slapped the Caïd heartily on the back.

Saïd ou Mohand clapped his hands again. A moment later the servants came running.

"Kill thou a sheep!" he directed. "And chickens—many chickens! Bring *Kesra*!* Summon the *Temman*!† Build up the fires! Prepare for our lord Roumi a '*diffa*'!"

"He is ordering a feast,—what you call, in the States, a 'barbecue'."

"How long does it take?" asked Mrs. Shafter.

"Three or four hours."

"Heavens! That will never do!" she protested. "Tell him we can't wait. We must hurry on to Engil! Explain that we are looking for our only son."

"He would be greatly offended," warned Capt. Truchet. "Anyhow, we cannot go on until they have dug out the motors."

Before long the clatter of renewed culinary preparations could be heard in the court outside, and a strong odor of singed feathers drifted in. A brown child, in a tiny shift that hardly reached his navel, came peeping coily round the arch and stared fascinatedly at Nancy with his black almond eyes. Saïd ou Mohand reached forth, caught the little boy in his arms, and fondly embraced him. Then, with the child lying across his bosom, he once more addressed Captain Truchet.

"The Caïd Saïd ou Mohand desires to know how many wives you have," translated the latter.

* Unraised bread.

† Council.

"Tell him only one," modestly replied the great Roumi.

"And how many donkeys, sheep and goats?"

"Not any!—Not a goat!" answered the Hon. Hiram.

Saïd ou Mohand seemed puzzled. He made a side remark to the Captain, who went into a voluble explanation. The Caïd nodded.

"He wanted to know how you could be a great lord and leader of men if you have no sheep and goats. I told him that you were too illustrious to indulge in private ownership; that others paid tribute to you."

A short silence, then:

"The Caïd Saïd ou Mohand desires to know the number of your fighting men."

Hiram hastily recalled the last Republican plurality in Union County.

"Seventeen thousand," he murmured casually.

Saïd ou Mohand raised his hands in astonishment.

"An army!" he marvelled.

"They act as one!" Hiram assured him. "Yes, sir! They do what I tell 'em."

The Caïd showed approval.

"That is as it should be! Sometimes my own men get out of hand, or wish to rest for a time.—Is your country hard to defend, like the *bled*, or easy, like the mountains?"

The Hon. Hiram expressed the opinion that on the whole, although not mountainous, his country was easy to defend. There had been, so far as he could

remember, few recent Democratic inroads upon the regular Republican majority.

"And how many sons have you?" inquired the Caïd as he gently restrained the little boy from kicking him in the stomach.

"One," answered Mr. Shafter.

"Is he a good fighter?"

"I'll say he is!" ejaculated Robert's father. "A corker! He got the what-do-you-call-it!"

It was evident that the Caïd felt that in the Hon. Hiram he had found a kindred spirit.

"He wants to know what you do when you are not occupied in fighting," said Truchet.

"Tell him I run a lumber mill."

"He wants to know what that is."

"A saw—that is worked by water—that cuts up trees."

Captain Truchet did his best, but with small result.

"He says it must be done by a jinn, because the jinns like the water. He thinks you must be a very wonderful man to be able to make the jinns work for you. He says there are jinns here in the *kasbah* but they only make trouble. In his opinion that is because they are Jewish jinns."

"That's too bad!" answered Hiram. "I had no idea that anti-Semitic prejudice extended to fairies. Tell him I run a bank, too."

"He knows nothing of banks. He sees very little money."

The officer labored for several minutes, illustrating his remarks by the aid of some small coins.

"The Caïd Saïd ou Mohand desires to know how much money you have in your *kasbah*."

"Our surplus and reserves are a million and a half. Tell him as many bags as I have fighting men."

The Caïd shook his head.

"Why should you lie to me?" he asked. "There is not as much money in the world!"

A moment of embarrassment followed.

"What do you do with this money?" he inquired at length.

"We lend it out at interest," replied Mr. Shafter.

"But that is usury!" declared the Caïd. "Usury is forbidden! It is not lawful to take more than one gives. To do so is to incur the displeasure of Allah."

"No, no!—Tell him he's mistaken about that. It's all right to charge reasonable interest," protested the Hon. Hiram.

Saïd ou Mohand clapped his hands.

"Where is Messaoud Ben Assan?" he demanded of his attendants.

"He is with the lambs," they answered.

"Send for him!" ordered the Caïd. "He is informed upon these matters. For twelve years he was a student in the Medersa at Fez. He can repeat the entire Koran by heart."

Presently in response to frantic shoutings there appeared in the doorway a tall and very dirty Berber clad in a soiled tunic. He wore no turban and car-

ried a long stick in his hand. Little patches of wool stuck here and there to his burnoose and to his eyebrows. Keeping his eyes averted from the Shafers he said:

"I am making ready the *diffa*. What does my lord wish?"

"Messaoud Ben Assan," directed the Caïd, "Tell us, did not The Prophet forbid usury?"

"He did, my lord."

"It is as I thought!" nodded Saïd ou Mohand. "Usury is forbidden."

"Not among the Roumis!" hissed Messaoud Ben Assan, and spat vigorously. "The Roumis are Christian dogs!"

Saïd ou Mohand pondered.

"Why do the Roumis disregard the wishes of Allah?" he mused.

"We don't!" answered Hiram, remembering that "the United States is in no sense a Christian nation."

"We believe in God the same as you do. We believe in Allah."

"Why, Hiram Shafter! You don't any such thing!" exclaimed his wife, aghast at what she regarded as her husband's apostasy. Had not the Christian martyrs died for a definition?

"Course we do!" he retorted. "There can't be more than one Almighty, no matter what name you give him.—Ask Saïd ou Mohand if he doesn't believe in the same God we do."

Before the Caïd could answer Messaoud Ben Assan interjected in high nasal recitative:

“‘And verily God is my Lord, and your Lord; wherefore serve him: this is the right way.’”

Truchet translated.

“What did I tell you?” challenged the Hon. Hiram.

“They don’t believe in Jesus Christ!” declared Mrs. Shafter. “Ask him that and see what he says!”

“Of a truth we believe in that great prophet,” answered Saïd ou Mohand gravely. “Messaoud Ben Assan, what says Al Koran of Christ Jesus?”

Messaoud Ben Assan placed the palms of his hands together and closing his eyes began swaying backward and forward:

“In that chapter of Al Koran, entitled ‘the Cow,’” he chanted, “revealed partly at Mecca and partly at Medina, it is written: ‘When the angels said: O, Mary, verily God sendeth thee good tidings, that thou shalt bear the Word proceeding from himself; his name shall be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, honorable in this world and in the world to come, and one of those who approach near to the presence of God; and he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous; she answered, Lord how shall I have a son, since a man hath not touched me? The Angel said, So God createth that which he pleaseth; when he decreeth a thing he only saith unto it, Be, and it is: God shall teach him the scripture, and wisdom,

and the law, and the gospel; and shall appoint him his apostle to the children of Israel.' ”

Nancy, who knew nothing of Islamic teaching, was astounded.

“And in the Book of Al Koran, entitled ‘Mary’ revealed at Mecca,” continued the herdsman, “is it not written how ‘she bade the child to answer them; and they said, How shall we speak to him, who is an infant in cradle? Whereupon the child said, Verily I am the servant of God; he hath given me the book of the gospel and hath appointed me a prophet. And he hath made me blessed, wheresoever I shall be; and hath commanded me to observe prayer, and to give alms, so long as I shall live; and he hath made me dutiful toward my mother, and hath not made me proud or unhappy. And peace be on me the day whereon I was born, and the day whereon I shall die, and the day whereon I shall be raised to life. This was Jesus, the son of Mary, concerning whom they doubt.’ ”

“Do you mean to tell me that all that is in the Koran?” inquired the Hon. Hiram incredulously of Captain Truchet. “I don’t see but what the Arabs believe practically the same as we do!”

But Messaoud Ben Assan had not concluded his rendition:

“It is said in Al Koran of Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, the apostle of God, that God took him up unto himself; and God is mighty and wise. And that there shall not be one of those who have received the

scriptures, who shall not believe in him, before his death; and on the day of resurrection he shall be a witness against them. Shall not all Jews and all Christians have a right faith in that prophet before his death; that is, when he descends from heaven and returns unto the world, where he is to kill Anti-Christ, and to establish the Mohammedan religion, and a most perfect tranquillity and security on earth?"

"So they actually think that Christ was a Mohammedan?" demanded Nancy incredulously.

"They accept him as a prophet," answered Capt. Truchet, "and since from their point of view there can be but one true religion, it follows that he must have taught it—at any rate in essence.

"Islam," he continued, "is little more than Christianity adapted to Arab mentality, or perhaps, to be more exact, it is all that the unimaginative brain of a Beduin has been able to assimilate of Christian teachings. The general doctrine of Islam is simple enough; one supreme God, like that of the Jews and Christians. They have no Trinity, no doctrine of the Son of God, the place of the Holy Ghost, as intermediary between the Prophet and the Divinity, being taken by the Angel Gabriel. The angels are divine messengers, but they are mortal and will come to life again like other creatures at the last day of judgment. The Jews, by denying the heavenly mission of Christ, have incurred the malediction of the Almighty. The Christians have gone astray in inventing dogmas

that have not been revealed; but the faithful of both religions can attain salvation, since they admit the two cardinal principles—the unity of God and the last judgment.

“‘The Christians,’ says the Koran, ‘will be judged by their Gospels; those who judged them otherwise would be prevaricators. Only enter into discussion with Jews and Christians in sincere and moderate terms . . . of a truth Mussulmans, Jews, Christians, and Sabeans, all those who believe in God and in the last judgment and who do good will be rewarded at His hands; they will be exempt from fear and punishment.’”

“If that is what Mohammed taught, why do they hate the Christians so?” asked Nancy.

“Islam,” answered Captain Truchet with a shrug, “like many other religions, was far more liberal in its texts than in its practices. Mohammed preached a religious toleration which his followers did not adhere to. The history of Christianity is not dissimilar. Christ taught love of all men, yet during the middle ages his followers devoted much of their time to slaughtering one another as well as those whom they regarded as infidels.”

“That’s true, too!” agreed the Hon. Hiram. “Pot can’t call the kettle black!”

During the time that Nancy had been taking part in the conversation Saïd ou Mohand had been showing as many signs of impatience as his extreme native politeness would allow. Now he spoke.

"The Caïd Saïd ou Mohand desires to know if *your* women would like to visit *his* women?" said Captain Truchet. "He has intimated to me that perhaps the men might like to be by themselves for awhile."

"Don't you think it might be interesting?" asked Nancy, looking across at Mrs. Shafter.

"I've got a couple more cigars in the motor," suggested the Hon. Hiram. "Anyhow we might look around a bit before we 'join the ladies'."

The Caïd, followed by Mr. Shafter and the two officers, led the way through the court, where on one side stood a couple of enormous braziers full of live coals. Over these two crouching Berbers held the carcass of a whole sheep on a pole, which they turned slowly with their hands, while a third Berber holding a stick with a wad of cotton on one end stood between them. From time to time he thrust the cotton into a bowl of melted butter and smeared it over the sheep. Other Berbers were busy plucking chickens, or pounding grain in mortars. There was a great deal of confusion and of hurrying to and fro without much apparent achievement.

The male party descended through the narrow passageways of the *kasbah* until they reached the open hillside. Below them the valley flowed northward, a broad dun-colored river confined between banks of greenish hills, until it lost itself in a blue haze. Along it Mr. Shafter could trace the irregular course of the *piste* by which they had come. But to

his surprise there was now only one motor where formerly there had been two. The second car, he was informed, had gone back to Boulemane for a pulley. It was even possible that it might bring a small wrecking-car with a derrick. It had already been gone half an hour.

"That means we shall be stuck here until afternoon," mourned Burbank. "However, we can easily make the run to Engil by dark."

"It will give you an opportunity to take part in a Berber feast," said Capt. Truchet. "It is an experience worth having—once. The cooking is excellent."

"I guess I can handle my share when the time comes. This mountain air makes me hungry," opined Mr. Shafter.

"'Handle' is the right word," agreed Burbank. "One eats with one's fingers, and uses only one hand—the right. To use the left would be an insult."

A diplomatic *entente* of extreme cordiality had been established between the two *caïds*—of the Aït Mohand and of Union County, both of whom appeared to understand one another quite well enough without Captain Truchet's assistance as an interpreter, and who had already established a basis of conversation by signs, friendly pats on the shoulders, and such easily understood expressions as "*Allah yirda 'aleyk!*"—"Good medicine!"—"I'll say so!" and "Giddi-gi-dick!"

As they neared the *kasbah* on their way back, Saïd ou Mohand directed Messaoud Ben Assan to hurry

along and order the *diffa* to be immediately prepared, upon which the head herdsman uttered a harsh remonstrance.

"What's the trouble?" inquired Mr. Shafter.

"He is protesting because the Caïd has ordered the feast to be made ready at once, whereas, since it is Ramadan, one may not, according to the Koran, eat until sundown.—Saïd ou Mohand told him to mind his own business!"

The outer court was already filled not only with the Aït Mohand but with neighboring tribesmen, who greeted Saïd ou Mohand with profound respect, the more important hastening forward to raise the hem of his burnoose to their lips. The lesser lights squatted on their haunches in long rows against the yellow wall or crowded about the braziers where the food was being cooked; children sprawled on their backs in the sunshine; dogs nosed hither and thither; a stream of women, white and black, hurried from one court to the other.

Mr. Shafter found his wife and Nancy in a sort of open kitchen watching two negresses preparing the *kous-kous*.

"How did you like the harem?" inquired Mr. Shafter.

"It was really rather pathetic!" answered Nancy. "The rooms were just bare whitewashed cells, with nothing whatever on the walls. There were two or three middle-aged women sitting around with a negro nurse and a couple of children, and when we

went in they got up and came over to us and began feeling of our dresses and jewelry without so much as saying a word."

"Didn't you see any harem beauties?" asked Hiram.

"The only one the least attractive," answered Nancy, "was a young woman nursing a baby. Didn't you see her loitering around outside while we were having tea? She is evidently the favorite wife. But I shouldn't call her pretty exactly. She's too fat and not over clean. But the baby's rather cute!"

Saïd ou Mohand, who had reappeared draped in a burnoose of white silk over a rose-colored caftan, motioned to them that it was time to eat, and the party now returned to the room adjoining the inner court and once more took their places upon the divans, between which a flat tabaret about three inches in height had been placed. This time Saïd ou Mohand did not sit down, but stood modestly near the doorway in general charge of the proceedings. Obviously as a good Mohammedan he did not intend to take part in the feast himself.

First a negress brought in a steaming bowl of thick soup, which she placed on the tabaret, while another filled a cup for each guest. Captain Truchet made a deprecatory gesture in the direction of the Caïd.

"Won't you join us?" inquired the Hon. Hiram fraternally.

Saïd ou Mohand smiled, showing his teeth, and made a polite reply.

"He says," translated Captain Truchet, "that he hopes the food will be to your taste."

The soup was delicious. The cups and bowl having been removed, Saïd ou Mohand looked anxiously through the door. A moment later the men servants came in from the outer court carrying between them a large brass platter or tray. Around the edge was a wide border of rice, which served as a containing wall or dam for the gravy, while in the centre was heaped a pile of steaming ribs and joints, topped by the head of an unfortunate sheep, still containing its white and glassy eyes. No napkins, knives or forks, were provided. Captain Truchet uttered an expression intended as a tribute to the Caïd's marvellous hospitality.

And now Saïd ou Mohand came forward and, kneeling down, pulled back the sleeve of his bur-noose; then, thrusting his right hand into the smoking pile of meat, dexterously wrenched off a succulent morsel. This he tasted and then held to the mouth of the Hon. Hiram, who had no choice but to consume what was left of it. The others at last mustered up enough courage to plunge in their own hands, although Nancy found that she could accomplish nothing without using both. Capt. Truchet said something by way of explanation for her bad manners to the Caïd, who nodded and, to show that there was no ill feeling, selected for her a large and particularly greasy bone.

"Hope he won't make us eat the eyes!" muttered the Hon. Hiram, as Saïd ou Mohand began hooking

out choice bits and presenting them to his guests, whose faces and hands were now thoroughly smeared with the gravy and fat.

The remains of the sheep having been borne out, a platter of chickens was brought in. There were three kinds of chicken,—of the “many chickens” re-ordered by Saïd ou Mohand,—roast chicken with potatoes, boiled chicken in a highly spiced sauce with peppers, and a sort of fricassee with a gray sauce containing raisins.

The final dish was the inevitable *kous-kous*, a sweet pudding of ground maize mixed with raisins, conical in shape, and powdered with cinnamon, which Nancy would have found quite appetizing had it not been for the condition of her fingers and the difficulty of eating it. Saïd ou Mohand, who had by this time forgotten that it was Ramadan, stuck his hand into the pyramid, pulled out a handful and juggled it in his palm until it had assumed globular form. Then balancing it on the nail of his thumb he flipped it backward with great accuracy into his open mouth. Try as they would, none of the others were able to vie with him in this, and they ended by shamelessly eating out of their hands. To their great relief at the conclusion of the meal the negroes reappeared carrying brass pitchers and bowls of water, with soap and towels for washing the hands and face. About this time Capt. Truchet to Nancy's surprise gave a loud hiccough, closely imitated by Lieut. Burbank.

"It's my only native accomplishment!" remarked Burbank. "Some people never learn to do it at all."

"What I need is a bath!" asserted the Hon. Hiram, a statement which nobody was disposed to deny.

The negresses were bringing in the brass tray containing the tea-things again.

"Three more cups!" whispered Burbank. "Or off go our heads!"

Saïd ou Mohand had just started to crack the sugar-cone when an excited tumult broke out in the court and Messaoud Ben Assan thrust his head through the doorway and shouted something to the Caïd who dropped his mallet and rose quickly to his feet.

A loud drumming was clearly audible just over the *kasbah*.

"There's an airplane coming down," explained Captain Truchet as Saïd ou Mohand hastily assisted his guests up a ladder and through a hole to the roof. "They say such a thing has never happened here before!" Indubitably the plane—a huge Blériot—was about to alight. It circled lower and lower and Nancy could see that it held two passengers besides the pilot. One of them was a French officer, the other a private, his head swathed in bandages.

"Must be in trouble," declared Burbank. "That's 'No. 6'—from Engil.—It's got a *blessé* on board, evidently. He can't be badly hurt because he's sitting up. Anyhow we'll soon know because he's going to land."

XVI

ROBERT had been carried back on a stretcher, from Azu to the base camp at Talzent, and thence, tightly strapped on the side of a "*mulet de caccolet*," had been brought down under convoy to the terminus of the military motor road. Here, after one night, he was placed in an *auto sanitaire* and taken to Ifkern fifty kilometres south of Boulmane. In spite of the rough travelling his wound gave him no pain, and already his two days' rest, after the incessant fighting of the last four months, had worked a miracle in his condition. His head no longer even ached, and lying in the motor-ambulance, and watching the wooded valleys through the open door trail off between his knees behind it, gave him a sense of luxurious idleness which was tainted only by the miserable consciousness that his wound really amounted to very little and that probably, after being examined by the *Médecin-Major* at Engil, he would be ordered back into the line after a week or two.

The road beyond Ifkern proved to be in such excellent condition, owing to the work done upon it by the legionnaires during the winter, that they reached Engil before noon and Robert, swinging gaily along on a pair of crutches, reported himself to the *Médecin-Major*, who gave one look at his already rapidly healing wound and ordered the leg rebandaged.

"You'll be walking on it to-morrow!" he remarked. "Take care of it yourself after this. You can discard your crutches whenever you feel like it.—Report to battalion headquarters immediately."

"Immediately!" It was even worse than he had expected! Must he turn right around and go jolting back over the rough *piste* into the mountains again! He was in no hurry to report to headquarters. Across the road in the aviation field a squad of men were pushing a big Blériot out of the hangar,—an ambulance auto, with padded seats for doctor and patient. Some fellow would have a cinch!

He found the major sitting at a table in his box-like office a hundred yards farther on, talking on the telephone with "H.Q." at Fez. He paid no attention to Robert, who could not avoid overhearing the conversation. Some officers, apparently, had started from Boulmane that morning for Engil, and their motor had got mired on the way. "H.Q." wanted them to go back to Boulmane.

"*Oui, oui! Très bien, Mon Général!*" said the major, automatically raising his unoccupied hand in a half salute, then hanging up the receiver. Robert saluted in full.

"I am Dooley, Legionnaire 27,841 *Deuxième Classe*, of *Compagnie Montée 'B'*. I was sent down from Talzent *blessé*. The *Médecin-Major* ordered me to report at once."

The officer retrieved his half-consumed cigarette from a saucer and lit it. Then he opened a blotter,

deliberately removed a sheet of paper from it and, eyeing Robert sharply, inquired:

"What is the true name of Legionnaire 27,841?"

"Robert Shafter, *Mon Commandant*."

"Where were you born?"

"Rome, Ohio, *Etats Unis*, *Mon Commandant*."

"How old were you when you enlisted?"

"Seventeen years and ten months, *Mon Commandant*."

"Did you have the consent of your parents when you enlisted?"

"No, *Mon Commandant*."

Robert turned stone cold. What was the significance of these questions? Why had he never been asked them before? The major blotted the paper and placed it inside the covers.

"*Bien!*" he said. "In that case you are discharged from the *Légion Etrangère*. You will receive your papers upon application to the company offices. You have also been recommended for the Croix de Guerre, by Major Pechkoff,—'with palms.' I congratulate you, *mon brave!*" He leaned forward quickly but turned his gesture into a handshake.—"Sit down. I forgot that you had been wounded."

Robert groped his way to a bench against the wall. What could it all mean?

"Your parents are here," continued the major after Robert had seated himself. "To-night they will be in Boulmane. I am just starting to Fez, *par avion*, and will take you along with me.—*Le diable!*—Quick,

orderly! A glass of cognac! The legionnaire has fainted!"

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§ 2

Strapped into the padded seat of the Bleriot, Robert felt, as well as saw, the white buildings of the post in their brown-green setting drop swiftly and swim away beneath them. He could hardly think on account of the uproar of the propeller, but his head had room for only a single thought. In less than half an hour he would see his mother! The tears started and dried on his cheeks. And Dad! Good old Dad! He'd see him, too. And of course they would bring news of Nancy! Was it possible that he would see her in two or three weeks?

Already the plane was high in air soaring toward the mountain-range beyond which lay Boulmane. They followed the chalk-line of a pass between two peaks, emerged beyond and saw before them a tumultuous ocean of hills stretching to the northern horizon. Suddenly the pilot turned and looked over his shoulder.

"Our oil-connection is loose!" he shouted. "We must make a landing!"

Robert could see the oil running down the pipes and dropping into the bottom of the plane. They were flying above a tangled terrain of narrow ravines and stark cliffs covered with stunted trees. As well try to land on the Woolworth Building! Then un-

expectedly the hillsides fell away disclosing a wide and almost level valley, at the apex of which a reddish black spot was rising swiftly toward them, a rectangular spot the color of dried blood. The jumble of yellow cubes beside it Robert recognized as a native village.

The major, who was craning his head over the side and peering downward through a pair of field-glasses, yelled something to the pilot. The latter nodded and they dipped toward the purple plain.

"The Aït Mohand," said the major. "We can land there—the ground is soft."

As they swept earthward Robert could see the *indigènes* running like ants out into the open to get an unimpeded view of the plane. The line of white burnouses on the village walls was like a string of beads. On the highest roof of all stood a group of people waving. The major pointed.

"That is the *kasbah* of the Caïd Saïd ou Mohand. He's all right—a good fellow."

They roared over the roof at a distance of a couple of hundred feet, and Robert was able to identify the uniforms of French officers and the dresses of women in European costume. His heart was making almost as much noise as the propeller. Beyond the *kasbah*, a quarter of a mile down the valley, a big motor stood empty in the middle of the road. Another, with two men on the front seat, was creeping toward it along the *piste*. The pilot, dropping lower and lower, shut off the engine, circled the field, and made a neat

landing on a putting green of young wheat which was just thrusting upward through the flat rich soil. The jar jerked loose the oil pipe, which began to spout like a small whale. The pilot leaned over and shut it off.

"Just in time!" he said, regarding it reproachfully. "I can make the reparation in a few moments, but it might have caused trouble for us!"

"We had better explain to the Caïd why we are trespassing on his field," advised the major. "I fancy that is he now,—on the white mule."

The crowd of *indigènes* parted to let Saïd ou Mohand come galloping through. Robert recognized him instantly. Save that he had no dagger in his hand he looked exactly as he had five months before on the plateau the night of the attack on Tichkoukt.

"Allah has sent guests to me from the skies!" he declared. "Already a great lord of the Roumis is here, for whom a feast is prepared. I give you my '*mezrag*.' Come and eat."

The major, assisted by the pilot, lifted Robert from the plane and, since the ploughed earth was too soft for crutches, carried him to the road, while Saïd ou Mohand clattered on ahead.

"It is necessary that we partake of his hospitality," explained the major. "He has only just made his submission. The Tseghouichene are a wild lot and the Aït Mohand the wildest of all. But we have nothing to fear. His word, once given, is inviolate."

The pilot had gone back to the plane. He wanted

one of the wing-tips for a souvenir, he said, and if he were not careful the *indigènes* would keep it all. With now and then a hand from the major, Robert hobbled along the lanes to the *kasbah* as fast as he could. The sight of the two motors, the major's conversation with headquarters over the telephone, the cluster of Europeans on the roof of the *kasbah*, were enough to encourage the belief that his parents might be there.

They found the Caïd in the courtyard surrounded by his followers ordering, amidst wild excitement, the wholesale execution of chickens—chickens—and still more chickens. Their headless bodies were flopping about everywhere. Squatting among the *membra disjecta*, around a flat bowl the size of a small bath-tub, a house-party of Berbers was regaling itself on the remnants of a sheep. So busily were they occupied in the joys of mastication that they scarcely so much as looked at the newcomers.

Robert pushed his way through the crowd toward the inner court. As he passed under the arch he came face to face with a woman who was standing there holding a baby in her arms. For an instant he could not believe his eyes. Aisha! Could this be the Aisha who had saved him from death, slain one of her own people in his defense, and piloted him across the *bled* to safety?

"Aisha!" he cried, overcome by a momentary resurgence of emotion, and held out his arms to her. "Aisha! Is it you?"

But she made no response. Perhaps she feared Saïd ou Mohand's glinting eyes. Gathering the child to her bosom she backed away out of the shadow of the arch into the court; and, with the sunlight on her face, Robert now saw that this was not the same Aisha who had followed her lord to battle, and had driven her knife through the throat of the marauder. This was an utterly different woman. In the intervening six months she had become fat and slatternly. The flash in her eyes was gone. Her expression had become stolid and morose.

What a race! She must have been carrying the child in her womb when she had been fighting beside her husband at Tichkoukt! She had gone back to the *kasbah*, back to the blanket after her brief awakening to romance, back to the slavery and degradation of a life of concubinage. Poor Aisha! Already her face had the look of a woman fast growing old. Probably she was fortunate. She could not cross the mountain ridge of inheritance that separated barbarism from civilization. Close to one another as they had been, close as they still were, he and she would have forever remained strangers. The difference between them was as insurmountable as the Atlas, as broad as the Atlantic. Perhaps she was not altogether unhappy, or if she were it was an unhappiness tempered by fatalism. Did she not bear the "*tafzint*" on her forehead? What more could a woman, denied entrance to the paradise of the Prophet, ask for in a savage world? Yes, she was far better off here in the

squalor and dirt of Saïd ou Mohand's *kasbah* than in the Bouz-Bir of Casablanca or the filthy brothels of Marrakech. To her it was a palace, her husband one of the great chieftains of Morocco, her child a future warrior and ruler of the Moghreb.

She bent her head slightly, turned, and without looking at him slipped from sight. The encounter had occupied in reality but a few seconds. It was well that there should be no aftermath of the adventure. She had had her hour. Whatever it might have meant to her would be treasured in her heart. With an intuitive wisdom borne of countless generations of bitter experience she had renounced him once before, and now, for the second time, did so again. Yes, it was well!

He hobbled ahead through the tunnel of the arch and out into a glare so blinding after the shadow that he did not at once see his mother. His first realization of her presence was the cry of joy with which she came hurrying toward him.

"Robert!—My boy!"

"Mother!"

She was sobbing in his arms, all tangled up in his crutches, and he was kissing her forehead and the gray hair on her temples.

"Darling! Are you badly hurt?"

"It's a mere nothing!"

She gazed at him through her tears without reproach.

"O, Robert!—Are you ready to come home, dear?"

"Am I?" There was a catch in his throat as he made an attempt at jocoseness. "I'll say I am!"

He felt a hand on his shoulder, a grip.

"Why, Dad!"

Mr. Shafter swallowed several times rapidly. It was no use. Pulling out his handkerchief the Hon. Hiram gave a queer sort of a hiccough and began to blow his nose.

"I—I—was just a—damned old fool, son!" he stammered. "You can go to college if you want to. Anything—I don't care, so long's you come back!"

Lieut. Burbank, grasping the import of the situation, planted himself with infinite tact with his back to the tableau, firmly in the archway, to stave off curious onlookers.

"We've got one more surprise for you," said his mother a moment later. "Nancy and Mrs. Vernon have been spending the winter in Morocco. We ran into them the other day in Fez.—Yes, she's here too! —Right over there!"

§ 3

The Caïd Saïd ou Mohand stood at the door of his *kasbah* bidding farewell to the Great Lord of the Roumis and to the latter's son, whom Allah had sent him from the skies. A big touring car panted in the roadway, and on its rear seat Robert sat between his mother and Nancy. The entire voting list of the Aït Mohand, if not of the Aït Tseghouchene, was jammed tight between mud wall and mud-guards. The pink

light of the declining sun shone on their upturned unwashed faces, their neglected teeth, the dirty white burnouses in which they were draped; while the mountain air from the rose-tinted snow fields bore with it suggestions of unsanitary horrors.

Saïd ou Mohand shook hands with his departing guests, kissing the back of his own hand each time. Already he had bestowed upon the Great Roumi a long knife in a scabbard of silver filigree bound with velvet, a *moukala* or flintlock rifle, a beautiful striped burnoose, horse-pistol, the dried carcass of a sheep and the tail of a fox killed on the eighth day of Ramadan.

"I feel like a grafter!" declared the Hon. Hiram standing up on the front seat to make his speech of acceptance. "All I've given Saïd is that old label out of my lid!—However! If he has faith enough, maybe it will keep the jinns from getting too gay with him. Anyhow, it's done good service in protecting my head from the cold, even if it hasn't kept me from getting bald!"

He waved his arms at the bank of faces, some grinning, some stern forbidding.

"Voters of the Middle Atlas!" he declaimed. "In behalf of our Committee I thank you for the wonderful reception you have given us. I shall carry it in my heart always—even if defeated. Your country is one of the finest on God's green footstool. I had no idea before I came here what wonderful scenery, what fertile farm-land, what an A1 climate you had. In

fact I had no idea about a lot of things. I thought you were a bum lot, but I can't see that you're very different from all the rest of us.

"Stick to the French! they're all right! They're giving you a square deal, and if you don't get too gay they'll continue to do so." He turned to the Caïd. "As for my old friend and Brother Elk—'Say-it-with-Mutton'—or whatever his name is,—he's a corker! He'd make a hit anywhere. I'd run him for Congress in a minute if he'd come out to Union County." He gave his friend and brother a smile of real warmth.

"Tell him we all think he's a peach, Cap'n Trooshay. That we hope to come back sometime—maybe; and that we'd like to have him visit us in Rome—also maybe! Only to be sure to wire in advance. But no fooling, tell him he's a great old skate and all to the good! Thank him a lot! Heap big chief! E Pluribus Unum! Vive la France! Allah Akbar! And Gid-digidick!"

"He understands!" smiled Captain Truchet. "—Almost as well as I do!"

From the courtyard behind Saïd ou Mohand arose a tumultuous and plaintive bleating. Nancy looked at Robert. Was this bronzed, lean-faced youth the same boy who had sat on her back porch playing the ukelele only last summer,—who had made such a pitiful attempt to sing that night at her mother's party?

"Ba-a!—Ba-a!—Ba-a-a!" came from the near-by enclosure.

Their eyes met and they laughed.

"'We're poor little lambs who've lost our way,' " he whispered, squeezing her hand. "Do you remember, Nancy?"

The chauffeur threw on the gas, the car backfired, and the crowd stampeded for safety.

"Good-by!—Good-by!" called the Shafters as the cars moved off.

Saïd ou Mohand raised his hand in benediction.

"Ye are of my people!" he declared. "May the blessing of Allah go with you!"

As they started down the hill Robert turned for a last look at the *kasbah* of Saïd ou Mohand. On the topmost roof stood the dejected figure of a woman holding a baby on one arm while she shaded her eyes with the other.

"I wonder who that girl is!" said Nancy. "I noticed her in the courtyard. She seems so—I don't know—not unhappy exactly,—but resigned!"

Once outside the walls and free from the importunities of the villagers they stopped for a moment to adjust the rugs.

"Wait a sec' till I light a cigar," said the Hon. Hiram. "Honest, I'm darn sorry to leave that old feller! I've been thinking! This foreign travel is a big education. Everybody ought to come abroad at least once, if for no better reason than to find out that America isn't the only country in the world, nor the Yanks the only people who know how to do things. Now I've got a suggestion. Robert needs a

rest, and Nancy and her mother don't want to go home yet. How would you like to extend our trip a little, and go on and see the rest of Morocco,—and Algeria,—and Tunis,—and then cross over by boat to Sicily may be,—and work back to Paris by way of Italy? I'd kinder like to meet the Sultan——”

“Why, Hiram Shafter!” admonished his wife.

“Yes, I would. And General de Shombrung said he'd give us a lot of letters to the p'shaws and other high muck-a-mucks. This is a real opportunity! Just because we've got Robert back again, we don't want to neglect it. If he ain't too fed up— It'll do him good, too! What do you say, Nancy?”

Nancy glanced first at Mrs. Shafter and then at her beloved.

“It's up to Robert!” she answered. “I'm quite ready to leave it entirely to him.”

“Well,” he replied. “I don't want to be selfish but—home sounds like a little bit of all right.”

“I'm ready to go back this minute!” interposed Mrs. Shafter. “Rome, Ohio, is good enough for me!”

Mr. Shafter rubbed his chin. He had not had a shave for two days.

“All the same I'd kind of like to give Rome, Italy, the once-over!” he said.

